



**DUKINFIELD**

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

(revised November 2017)

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Introduction

### **Mission Statement**

“St Mary’s Catholic Primary School works to develop the full potential of each individual in an environment where the Gospel values of love, peace, truth and justice are lived out”

Every child in our school has the right to enjoy learning and play, feeling happy and comfortable. In accordance with the ethos and mission statement of St. Mary’s Catholic Primary School, we pledge to respect the equal human rights of all our pupils and to educate them about equality. We will also respect the equal rights of our staff and other members of the school community. We will comply with all equality legislation and be particularly mindful of the need to protect pupils and all other members of our community from homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying in order to make all children feel safe and welcome.

This policy sets out to make clear the expectations of attendance at St Mary’s Catholic Primary School. At St Mary’s Catholic Primary School we believe that an appropriately engaging curriculum and thorough planning for the needs of individuals lead to effective learning, thus contributing to good attendance.

At St Mary’s Catholic Primary School we believe that each child has the right to the best education which can be provided in partnership between school, parents and the community. We therefore aim, through robust, consistent and fair management of pupil attendance, to establish an environment in which each child may develop their full potential.

### **Who is this policy for and who is responsible for implementing it?**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility - parents and carers, pupils and all members of school staff. This policy is written particularly with staff, parents and carers in mind. Parents and carers have a very important role in making sure that their child(ren) attend(s) regularly and this policy sets out how we can achieve this by working in partnership.

### **Why Regular Attendance is so important**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil’s absence disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child’s regular attendance at school is a parent’s legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The overall **absence rate** across primary schools nationally has remained broadly stable since 2013-14, at around 4%. Therefore, nationally attendance rates are around 96%. Our school target will be set at 1% above the national target and will be communicated to parents and carers on a regular basis. Therefore our current (2017-18) whole school attendance target is 97%.

## Promoting Regular Attendance

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details and reminders on attendance in our weekly newsletter when appropriate;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and other rewards.

## Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required at St Mary's - in writing.

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 cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave of absence" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after 9.30am at St Mary's)
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been authorised
- If a child's rate of attendance is below an acceptable level

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

## Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and efforts may be combined with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

PA pupils and their parents may become the subject of an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or other support worker, use of circle time,

individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to our Education Welfare Officer.

**If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible (and always before 10am) on the first day of absence;
- If the absence is due to illness which continues beyond 48 hours, we request that you inform the school;
- Send a written note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – **you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;**

**If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone you on the first morning of absence if we have not heard from you (soon after 10am);
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the headteacher if absences persist or there are patterns of non-attendance;
- Refer the matter to our Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below an acceptable level.

**Telephone numbers**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. To help us to help you, please make sure that we always have an up to date and full postal addresses and telephone numbers. If a child's parents are separated and both have parental responsibility then we must have full contact details for both parents, unless there are valid and verifiable reasons not to have this information.

With effect from September 2017, we also require contact details for a friend or relative who is also a keyholder of the property where the child lives. If your child resides at more than one property, contact details of a third contact (keyholder) for each of those properties is required. This is due to recent guidance issued in respect of safeguarding children.

**The Education Welfare Officer**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer a child to our Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve a child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the school can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority (Tameside).

## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. Arriving late can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage further absence.

### **How we manage lateness:**

At St Mary's, the school day starts at **8.50am** and we expect your child to be in school at that time.

The gate onto the playground closes at 8.50am and, if your child arrives after the gate closes, then they must come into school by way of the main school office. If this is the case, they will automatically receive a late mark in the register. If your child arrives at **9.00 am or later**, a parent or carer **must** come into the office with them and sign them in.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or Education Welfare Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

## **Holidays In Term Time: Important changes from September 2013**

Important amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments came into force on 1st September 2013 and remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days which headteachers used to be allowed to grant. These amendments make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.

This means that, from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, the headteacher of St Mary's Catholic Primary School will not authorise any holidays in term time other than in **exceptional circumstances**. These occasions will be extremely rare. Parents should also be aware that by taking children out of school they will be issued with a penalty notice for periods of unauthorised holiday absence.

The Governing Body of St Mary's expect the headteacher of St Mary's Catholic Primary School to uphold the law when parents request holiday leave during term time. St Mary's is required to be proactive in discouraging absence.

### **When are Penalty Notices issued?**

As a school we will always seek to issue penalty notices in a fair and equitable manner, without fear or favour. Penalty notices (which are fines) will be issued for all occasions of **unauthorised absence** of 10 sessions or more (one school week) which have been previously declined by the headteacher/governors.

School takes a particularly dim view when no request for authorised absence has been received prior to a child being away from school for 10 sessions or more. This is a safeguarding concern for the school. Should information come to light which indicates that a child has been taken on holiday in these circumstances then we will always seek to impose a penalty notice.

### **Defining 'Exceptional Circumstances'**

Parents and Carers with parental responsibility who wish to request authorised leave of absence must complete and submit a 'Pupil Leave of Absence' request form. Only in exceptional circumstances will holiday leave be authorised during term time. Such exceptional circumstances may include:

- Significant family occasions involving a close family member.
- Where service personnel, or other employees, are prevented from taking leave during school holiday times. These requests may be granted upon receipt of documentary evidence in support of the application and only if the holiday, in the view of the headteacher, will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education. A pupil's rate of attendance **AND** punctuality must **BOTH** be at or above the school's target attendance rate (currently 97%) in order for the request to be authorised.
- Other occasions which fall outside of the above descriptions may be considered by the Governing Body. Where possible, these should be submitted in good time (at least 3 weeks in advance) and will be referred to the Chair of Governors in the first instance and at the headteacher's discretion.

The Headteacher of St Mary's will **not** consider authorising a request for leave of absence if it:

- Is during assessment weeks, National Curriculum SATs or examination periods;
- Overlaps with the beginning or end of a new term;
- Is due to availability of the desired accommodation;
- Is due to availability of cheaper holidays;
- Is due to poor weather experienced in school holiday periods.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. This means that when a pupil has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more, in any term (where no acceptable reason has been given for the absence) or if their child persistently arrives late for school after the close of registration, their parents or carers may receive a Penalty Notice of £120, which is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. The penalty notice will need to be paid in full before 28 days of the notice being served. Failure to pay a penalty notice may result in prosecution (a separate penalty notice may be issued to each parent/carer for each child).

In law, an offence is committed if a parent or carer fails to secure a child's regular attendance at school. Tameside Education Welfare Service, in conjunction with schools and Greater Manchester Police, will use these powers as an early deterrent to prevent patterns of unauthorised absence developing.

Parents may also receive a Penalty Notice (i.e. a fine) without a warning letter for the offence of failing to secure regular school attendance under the following circumstances:

- Their child is stopped on a truancy sweep more than once
- They go on holiday in term time without school's permission
- The child fails to return to school following a fixed term exclusion

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also makes it an offence if a parent fails to ensure that their child is not in a public place during the first 5 days of a fixed term or permanent exclusion. Penalty Notices may be issued for such an offence.

The Local Authority and schools are committed to providing the best possible future for your child. If you have concerns about your child's attendance at school or if you are experiencing any difficulties, please contact your school and ask for help.

### **School Targets and Special Initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is 97% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress towards and beyond this figure.

However, our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we truly believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the local authority. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

### **Strategies for encouraging better Attendance**

Annual awards for 100% attendance

Class rewards (a termly competition for Juniors and Infants) e.g. Commando Joe's

Published class comparisons in the newsletter

Attendance Traffic Lights in every class – updated every eight weeks (after every second Attendance Review) by CTs based on information provided by the Administration and Attendance Officer.

### **Procedure for Absence Letters**

During every academic year, all pupils' attendance will be reviewed by the Administration and Attendance Officer at least once every eight weeks. During the Autumn Term, pupils whose attendance is less than 93% will receive the school's 1<sup>st</sup> Attendance letter (see Appendices).

If attendance is still below 93% after a subsequent four week period, the school's 2<sup>nd</sup> Attendance (Review Meeting) letter will be sent and parents/carers will be invited to school to discuss their child's attendance and ways to improve it. At this meeting an action plan will be written with parents and put in place. If the parent/carer fails to attend this meeting then the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be informed and become involved.

If, after attending an Attendance Review Meeting and a further 4 week period, a child's attendance remains below 93%, then a third and final letter will be sent to parents. This letter will notify

parents that a referral has been made to our Education Welfare Officer, who will then become involved in the case.

During the Spring Term, the attendance will be measured at 94% and below, and in the Summer Term, 95% and below.

An Attendance Monitoring file is used to file copies of letters that have been sent to parents and carers.

The above procedure for attendance is mirrored in our monitoring of punctuality (see letter templates in the Appendices).

### **Children Missing in Education**

St Mary's Catholic Primary School must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous absence of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school, and the local authority (or in default of such agreement, at intervals determined by the Secretary of State).

### **Supporting Children at School with Medical Conditions**

There is a Local Authority Protocol in place for supporting children at school with medical conditions. Tameside MBC is committed to providing a good education to all pupils regardless of circumstances or settings. Where a pupil is unable to attend school for medical reasons the local authority will work alongside schools, health professionals and parents to provide an alternative provision which will meet a pupil's individual needs, including social and emotional needs and enable them to thrive and prosper in the education system.

Wherever possible the local authority would look at education provision being provided by school to ensure continuity for pupils. However, it is recognised that in some circumstances that is not possible and provision for such cases will be considered by a case management panel on an individual basis.

For further information please refer to the 'Local Authority Protocol for Supporting Children at School with Medical Conditions' which can be found on the school's website and also Tameside Council's website.

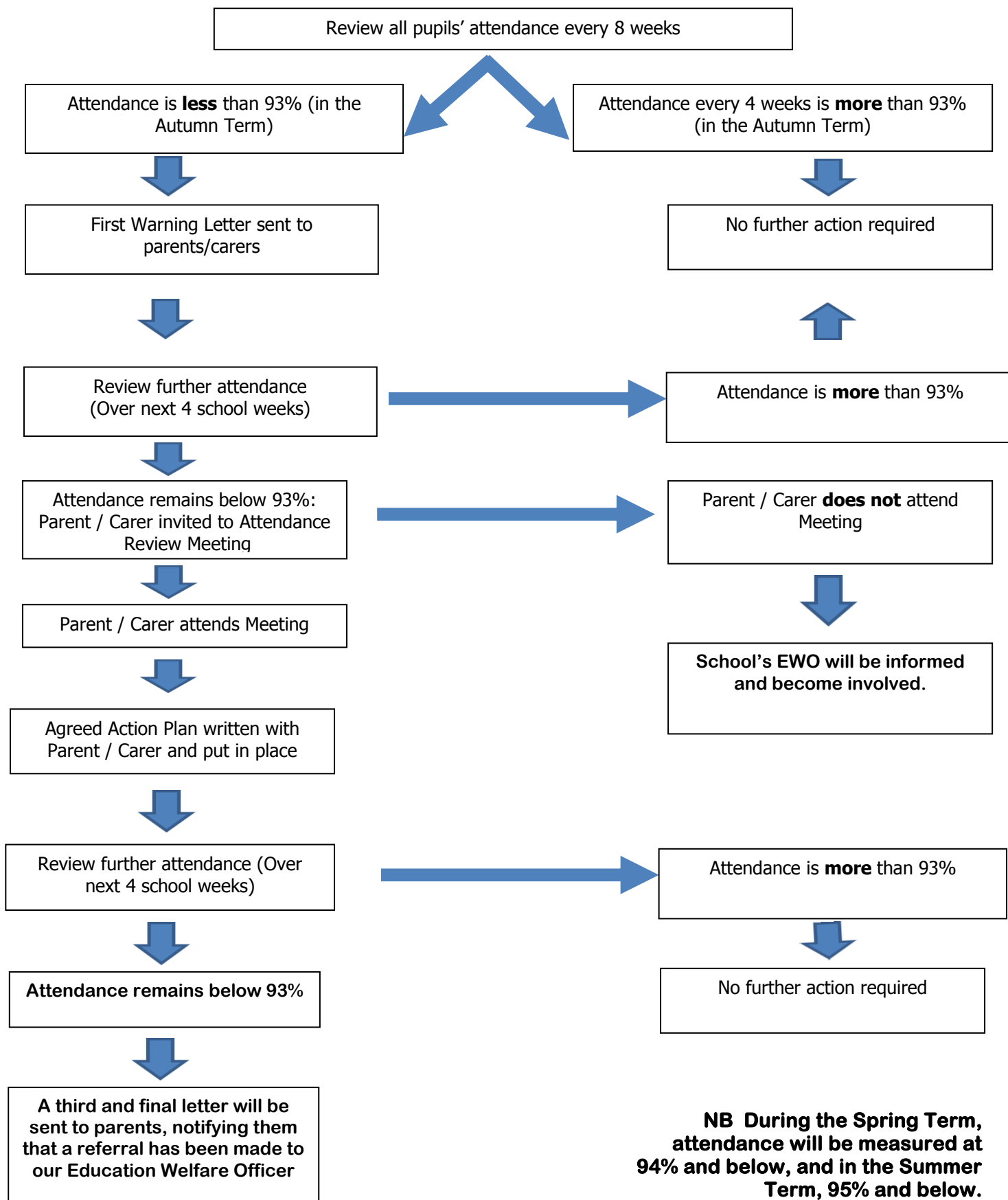
### **Conclusion**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

**This Policy was reviewed and approved by the full Governing Body on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015 and was subsequently updated and approved by the Safeguarding, Premises and Health and Safety Committee on behalf of the full Governimng Body on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017.**



## Flow chart for monitoring pupil attendance



# Appendices



Cheetham Hill Road  
Dukinfield  
Cheshire  
SK16 5LB

Tel: 0161 368 4824  
Fax: 0844 292 7656

admin@st-marys-dukinfield.tameside.sch.uk  
Headteacher: Mr J. Murray

### School Attendance: First Warning Letter

DATE

Dear \_\_\_

Good attendance is necessary for all children. Research shows that children who attend school regularly and punctually perform better at school and in their later lives than those with less good attendance. Therefore, the government expects the level of school attendance for all primary aged pupils to be no lower than 96%. Our current school target attendance rate is 97%.

Your child has missed \_\_\_\_\_ sessions since September. This gives an attendance of \_\_\_% which is well below the school target level. Therefore, we are monitoring your child's level of attendance each half term and looking forward to seeing an improvement. Please look at the example below and compare it against your own child's attendance.

#### Attendance

100% =	Excellent attendance
90% =	½ days absence every week
80% =	1 days absence every week
70% =	1½ days absence every week
60% =	2 days absence every week
50% =	2½ days absence every week

#### Arriving late for school

10 mins. late every day = missing 6 full days in a year  
30 mins. late every day = missing 4 full weeks in a year

We are aware that children may have specific illnesses that prevent them from attending school and this could have brought your child's attendance level down. Holidays, authorised or not, have the same effect and have a detrimental impact on your child's education.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter in full, please do not hesitate to contact school.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Murray  
Headteacher



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Headteacher: Mr J. Murray

Date

**Attendance Review Meeting**

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to you regarding [ name of child's] continuing poor rate of attendance at school. We wrote to you on [date] when your child's rate of attendance was [insert]. After four more weeks, your child's attendance is still at [insert rate]. This is not a sufficient improvement.

We are therefore inviting you to an Attendance Review Meeting at school. This is a meeting between Parent/Carer and Headteacher. The aim of the meeting is to discuss the reasons for your child's current rate of attendance as well as to determine ways in which future rates of attendance can be improved.

It is essential that you attend this meeting. Non-attendance will lead to Education Welfare Services being informed and their level of intervention increasing.

A meeting has been scheduled to take place at school on [date and time].

Please indicate that you have received this letter and that you will be attending on the reply slip below.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Mr J. Murray  
Headteacher

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**Attendance Review Meeting**

I have received the letter inviting me to an Attendance Review Meeting at school on [date and time]

I will/ will not be attending the meeting.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Carer of: \_\_\_\_\_



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**School Attendance: Consideration of Legal Proceedings**

DATE

Dear

I have contacted you previously on two occasions regarding the poor attendance of your child [insert name].

\_\_\_\_\_ % Attendance at 1<sup>st</sup> Letter  
\_\_\_\_\_ % Attendance at 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter

[Name of child's] current rate of attendance is still unacceptably low at [insert percentage]. I am concerned that there has been no significant improvement. Therefore, due to the seriousness of the situation, I have referred the matter to our Education Welfare Officer [insert name] for consideration of Legal Proceedings.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Murray  
Headteacher



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Date

**Failure to Attend an Attendance Review Meeting**

Dear Parent/Carer

You were invited to attend an Attendance Review Meeting on [insert date and time] in order to discuss ways to improve the unsatisfactory attendance of your child [insert name of child].

Your non-attendance means that Education Welfare Services have been informed and their level of intervention will increase. Therefore you should expect to be contacted by the school's Education Welfare Officer in the near future.

Failure to engage with the school's EWO in order to improve your child's current rate of attendance is one factor that may be taken into consideration when deciding to issue a Penalty Notice under Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Murray  
Headteacher



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### Punctuality in school: First Warning Letter

DATE

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Good punctuality is necessary for all children. Research shows that children who attend school regularly and punctually perform better at school and in their later lives than other pupils. We expect children to arrive at school on time every day.

Your child has been late for school on \_\_\_\_\_ occasions since September. This gives a punctuality percentage of \_\_\_% which is well below our target level.

At St Mary's, the school day starts at 8.50am and we expect your child to be in school at that time. The gate onto the playground closes at 8.50am and, if your child arrives after the gate closes, then they must come into school by way of the main school office. **If this is the case, they will automatically receive a late mark in the register.**

We are monitoring your child's level of punctuality each half term and looking forward to seeing an improvement. Please look at the example below and compare it to your own child's punctuality:

#### Arriving late for school

**10 mins. late every day = missing 6 full days in a year**

**30 mins. late every day = missing 4 full weeks in a year**

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter in full, please do not hesitate to contact school.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Murray  
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Date

**Punctuality Review Meeting**

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to you regarding [ name of child's] continuing current poor rate of punctuality at school. We wrote to you on [date] when your child's rate of punctuality was [insert]. After four more weeks, your child's punctuality is still at [insert rate]. This is not a sufficient improvement.

We are therefore inviting you to an Punctuality Review Meeting at school. This is a meeting between Parent/Carer and Headteacher. The aim of the meeting is to discuss the reasons for your child's current rate of punctuality as well as to determine ways in which future rates of punctuality can be improved.

It is essential that you attend this meeting. Continued poor punctuality will lead to Education Welfare Services being informed and their level of intervention increasing.

A meeting has been scheduled to take place at school on [date and time].

Please indicate that you have received this letter and that you will be attending on the reply slip below.

Thank you for you co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Murray  
Headteacher

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**Punctuality Review Meeting**

I have received the letter inviting me to a Punctuality Review Meeting at school on [date and time]

I will/ will not be attending the meeting.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Carer of: \_\_\_\_\_





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**School Punctuality: Consideration of Legal Proceedings**

DATE

Dear

I have contacted you previously on two occasions regarding the poor punctuality of your child [insert name].

\_\_\_\_\_ % Punctuality at 1<sup>st</sup> Letter  
\_\_\_\_\_ % Punctuality at 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter

[Name of child's] current rate of punctuality is still unacceptably low at [insert percentage]. I am concerned that there has been no significant improvement. Therefore, due to the seriousness of the situation, I have referred the matter to our Education Welfare Officer [insert name] for consideration of Legal Proceedings.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Murray  
Headteacher



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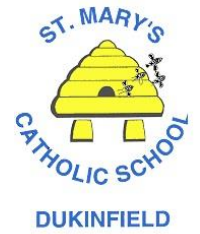
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**Yours sincerely**

**Mr J Murray  
Headteacher**



## St Mary's Attendance Improvement Plan



<b>Pupil:</b>		<b>Rate of attendance at date of review:</b>	
<b>Date of Birth:</b>		<b>Review date:</b>	
<b>Year Group</b>		<b>Target rate of attendance:</b>	

<b>Actions:</b>	<b>Desired outcomes:</b>	<b>Time scale:</b>

Parent/ Carer Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Headteacher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# PUPIL'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Governing Body of the school has a **discretionary** power to allow pupils to be absent during term time to take a family holiday. This can only be granted in exceptional circumstances, and the pupil's attendance record will be taken into account when any request for leave of absence is considered.

Parents are reminded that leave of absence during term time is **not** a right, and will only be granted with the greatest reluctance, as **any** absence has a detrimental effect on a pupil's academic progress and overall attendance level. Absence for holidays, which have not previously been approved, will be categorised as unauthorised.

Section 444(a) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices to parents/carers if they go on holiday in term time without school's permission or are late returning from an extended holiday,) they may receive a Penalty Notice fine of £60, which must be paid within 28 days. If payment is made after 28 days but within 42 days, the penalty is increased to £120. Where a fine remains unpaid after 42 days, the matter will be referred to the Borough Solicitor, who will consider instigating criminal proceedings.

As the Governing Body must consider the request for absence, please ensure that the application is submitted to school well before the proposed period of absence.

Name of Pupil:	
Date(s) of Proposed Absence:	Last date in school:
	First date returned to school:
Reason for absence:	
<b>Declaration</b> I confirm that the details given on this form are correct and that it is necessary for the holiday to be taken during term time for the reason stated.	
Signed _____ Date _____	
Authorised by Headteacher	Unauthorised by Headteacher
Comments	