

# St. Mary's Catholic Primary School



**In Jesus' footsteps we learn, love and grow  
together to be the best that we can be!**

## Attendance Policy

## Introduction

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. It is therefore the responsibility of everyone at St. Mary's to monitor and support attendance and to investigate problems, which lead to non-attendance.

The school expects parental responsibility to extend beyond mere attendance. Parents should ensure that their children arrive on time, properly attired and in a condition to learn. Also, parents need to instil into their children a respect for education and for those who deliver it and also stress the need to observe the school rules and contribute to the positive ethos that is desired.

## School's Roles and Responsibilities

All staff (teaching and support) at St. Mary's have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

At St. Mary's, the Headteacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. Mrs Karen Morgan, Assistant Admin Officer, will ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with relevant personnel; pupils and parents are regularly reminded about the importance of good school attendance and data may be used to reinforce this. A report is prepared for the governing body, termly. The headteacher and admin officer will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

## Categorising Absence

A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked as having **unauthorised absence**, unless leave has been granted by the school in advance, or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the headteacher.

St. Mary's recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment/ progress, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at St. Mary's will discuss with parents the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the Headteacher / Governing Body.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 1 week, the absence will remain unauthorised.

Absence **will be authorised** in the following circumstances:

1. where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
  - to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
  - a pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion – in authorising such an absence, the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered.
2. where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
3. where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand);
4. where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
5. in other exceptional circumstances (eg a family bereavement) and for a very limited period.

Except in the circumstances described above, absences **will be unauthorised**. Some reasons for not authorising absence would be:

- family holiday;
- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, eg a birthday;
- visiting relatives;
- looking after brothers or sisters

The Head Teacher will contact parents of children whose absences are thought to be excessive for whatever reason. A child who has been temporarily excluded from school will be deemed to be an authorised absence.

### **Reporting Absence**

The school expects parents to telephone or email school before 10am giving the reason for their child's absence that day or if unable to do so, submit a note on the child's return to school. Telephone messages will be noted and passed to the class teacher.

Parents have to right to request up to 10 days for family holidays. No parents can demand leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday as a right. Parents are requested to make an appointment with the headteacher to complete a holiday form to provide an explanation for the intended absence (Appendix 2). It is then at the head teacher's discretion as to authorise or unauthorise the holiday. This will be retained in the school office. In every case the school will inform the parents that any holidays taken in term time will have a detrimental effect on the child's progress.

### **School Attendance Officer**

St Mary's works very closely with the cluster School Attendance Officer (SAO), Karen McLean, to monitor and improve attendance within the school. Mrs McLean visits the school weekly to meet with the admin assistant to discuss attendance and agree any actions needed. Mrs McLean meets with the headteacher every 4 weeks and from this meeting letters are sent to parents to encourage good attendance and arrange meetings with parents where there are concerns. Our SAO conducts home visits, contacts parents, attends parent meetings and makes referrals to the Educational Welfare Service when necessary.

### First Day Calling

St. Mary's has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation, to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence, or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, a text will be sent asking parents to contact us.

### Meetings with Parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence over a 3-to-4-week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans are put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them. Attendance is discussed with parents at every parents' consultation each year in October and March.

### Lateness and Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes and before 9.30am will receive a 'late' mark. After 9.30am it will be an authorised or unauthorised absence. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other pupils with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the School Attendance Officer.

Where a pupil arrives late for school, but before the register closes parents / carers are asked to sign in the pupil on the ipad system. Persistent lateness will be followed up by a letter / meeting with those concerned and strategies suggested to improve the matter. The matter is referred to the School Attendance Officer if no improvement is seen.

For Health and Safety reasons, it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day, are collected from /returned to the Office area. Parents / Carers are asked to sign their children out on the ipad system and do not go to the classrooms.

### **Extended Leave of Absence**

Where parents request an extended trip overseas to visit family (where this is the country of their origin) an appointment must be made with the headteacher to complete the Leave of Absence form. Parents are informed that a pupil will kept on the school roll for up to 4 weeks, but after this period of a time a child can be taken off roll and their place taken by another child.

### **Parents' / Carers' responsibilities**

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by St. Mary's.

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents are also expected to:

- notify school on the first day of absence; a telephone call is sufficient. We ask that children are not asked to relay a message about another child's absence, or reasons for it.
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, supporting with home learning and taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. St. Mary's will endeavour to support parents to address any concerns.

### **Governors' responsibilities**

The governing body of St. Mary's shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

### **Encouraging Good Attendance**

All children are encouraged to have good attendance. St Mary's places great importance on creating an environment that welcomes pupils and encourages them to attend. The school will also make every effort to enlist the support of the community, police and neighbours to help in improving its attendance record and in reporting incidents of misbehaviour when children are on their way to and from school. In this way the school is emphasising the importance of good attendance.

St. Mary's uses the following strategies to promote and reward good attendance:

- Pupils with 100% attendance at the end of each term are rewarded in Merit Assembly.
- Pupils with 100% attendance at the end of each year attend afternoon tea with the headteacher.



# CLUSTER ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Polisi Presenoldeb y Clwster

MARY IMMACULATE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL  
and  
PARTNER PRIMARY SCHOOLS

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
CANTON



ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
GRANGETOWN



ST CUTHBERT'S PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
CARDIFF BAY



ST FRANCIS PRIMARY SCHOOL, ELY



## **Mary Immaculate Cluster Attendance Policy**

### **1. Introduction and aims**

1.1 The success of a child at school is likely to be affected negatively if their attendance is below 95%. Those who do not attend regularly will certainly fall behind in their learning, leading to a failure to reach their full potential. As a school, we seek to provide a Catholic environment in which all young people can flourish as a member of a happy, caring and safe community. It is our goal that all pupils attend school regularly and on time, making the most of all the opportunities available to them.

1.2 Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated very seriously. Every case is, however, different and we will always try to support families to improve attendance and punctuality. This Attendance Policy is designed to help teachers, parents and pupils understand their rights, responsibilities and roles when it comes to school attendance. By working in partnership, it is our hope that every pupil achieves over 95% attendance.

1.3 The Mary Immaculate cluster of schools aims to:

- Give attendance and punctuality the highest priority;
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities to ensure consistency and rigour;
- Provide support, advice and guidance to families;
- Use attendance data systematically to evaluate success;
- Use rewards to celebrate good attendance;
- Use sanctions sensitively, when necessary;
- Work in partnership with the SAOs at Mary Immaculate to liaise with families and refer to the Education Welfare Service, as required; and
- Support pupils returning to school after significant periods of absence.

### **2. Rights, responsibilities and roles**

2.1 The Mary Immaculate Cluster has its basis in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We believe that all young people have the right to education, based on equality of opportunity, and that the school, in partnership with parents and other parties, must take measures to encourage regular school attendance and reduce rates of absenteeism.

2.2 Mary Immaculate's cluster schools are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to take attendance registers twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

2.3 Parents are required under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that their child receives effective full-time education.

2.4 Cardiff Local Authority is required under section 437 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

2.5 The Mary Immaculate's Cluster Attendance Policy is written to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and in the understanding of life based on the Catholic faith

2.6 Mary Immaculate's cluster schools aim to work in partnership with young people, parents and families so that pupils can benefit from the educational opportunities provided for them at school. Key members of staff include:

- Mrs Bridget Thwaites (Education Welfare Officer)
- Mrs J Jones (Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for Attendance, Mary Immaculate High School)
- Mrs Karen McClean (Cluster SAO)
- Mrs Katie O'Neill (Part time SAO)
- Mrs K. Morgan (St Mary's Primary School)
- Mrs J Bohling (St Patrick's Primary School)
- Mrs L Jones (St Francis' Primary School)
- Mrs B. Brooks (HT) (St Cuthbert's Primary School)

2.7 This framework operates in conjunction with Cardiff Local Authority's 'Five Step System of Attendance Management'.

### 3. Procedures

#### *Registration procedures*

3.1 To ensure accuracy and consistency, all pupils are registered either manually or electronically via the Capita School Information Management System (SIMS).

3.2 Pupils are registered every lesson at Mary Immaculate and every session in Partner Primary Schools.

3.3 Teachers, Cover Supervisors and Supply Teachers are informed of all registration procedures and comply with them.

3.4 In instances of lateness, the absent (N) mark is altered to the late (L) mark. The degree of lateness will be recorded using the appropriate procedures.

#### *Categorisation of absence*

3.5 The following codes, as set out by the Welsh Government 2010, are used by the Cluster:

<b>Code</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Statistical category</b>
/\	Present at registration	present
L	Late but arrived before the register closed	present
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)	approved educational activity
D	Dual registered (ie present at another school or at a PRU)	approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	approved educational activity

J	Interview	approved educational activity
W	Work experience (not work based training)	approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered elsewhere)	authorised absence
F	Agreed extended family holiday	authorised absence
H	Agreed family holiday	authorised absence
I	Illness	authorised absence
M	Medical or dental appointment	authorised absence
S	Study leave	authorised absence
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	authorised absence
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	authorised absence
N	No reason for the absence provided yet	unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes)	unauthorised absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed or in excess of agreement)	unauthorised absence

Where pupils are not required to attend school the additional codes X, Y, Z and # may be used.

### Procedures for absence and lateness

3.7 Parents are asked to contact the school by telephone on the first day of their child's absence. Designated staff in each school monitor telephone calls each morning and First Day Response procedures are triggered.

3.8 Should the school be unable to ascertain the reason for absence, a letter will be sent to parents seeking explanation.

### Authorisation of absence

3.9 Absences may only be approved by authorised representatives of the school. Mary Immaculate's cluster schools exercise caution in the authorisation of absence and parents must seek to provide the school with a full picture of the reasons leading to their child's absence.

3.10 The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 give schools discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child from school for a holiday and, in law, have to apply for permission from the school in advance. Holidays during term time will not be authorised.

## 4. Intervention

4.1 Mary Immaculate's cluster schools recognise the important role that parents play in promoting good school attendance. The school therefore seeks to provide professional, quality information and advice, communicated frequently eg. by means of newsletter, leaflets, pupil planners, parents' evenings, school reports or the school website.

4.2 Mary Immaculate's cluster schools operate a 'late at the gates' scheme and SAOs meet with parents in an attempt to discourage lateness and identify pupils who are persistently late for school.

4.3 SAOs and other staff closely monitor post-registration attendance lists in an attempt to identify instances of truancy. In such cases, senior staff are alerted. Parents are telephoned so that action can be taken to locate missing pupils and return them to safety.

4.4 The SAOs, in collaboration with the Educational Welfare Service and South Wales Police, may conduct regular 'truancy sweeps' in Cardiff City Centre and throughout the relevant areas of the city.

4.5 When concerns are raised by parents or staff about a pupil's school attendance, Attendance Officers will make a home visit. During the home visit they provide information and advice and seeks to support the pupil in returning to school.

4.6 When a pupil has been absent for an extended period, they are welcomed positively on their return. Appropriate staff are responsible for ensuring that, where possible, extended support is made available to the pupil, helping them to 'catch up' and move forward.

4.7 The SAOs work closely with the Mary Immaculate's cluster group of schools to ensure that good school attendance is maintained at all times. The SAOs also ensure that attendance and punctuality are given a high priority throughout the duration of pupils' compulsory education.

4.8 Excellent attendance is celebrated and certificates and rewards are given to those students achieving 100% attendance or whose attendance has improved significantly. Every school in the cluster has its own methods of rewarding positive attendance.

### Hierarchy of sanctions

4.9 Mary Immaculate's cluster schools are caring schools and always seek to resolve matters of poor attendance through effective partnership working with parents. On the rare occasion that the school are unable to elicit in parents the support deemed necessary to encourage pupils to attend school, sanctions will be used. In the first instance, parents may receive letters which:

- Request reasons for their child's absence;
- Request medical evidence for their child's absence;
- Express concern about their child's absence and offer advice and support;
- Advise them about their child's lateness and ask for their help in getting their child to school on time;
- Advise them that the school has taken the decision not to authorise an absence;
- Advise them that an Attendance Officer intends to visit their home;
- Advise them of their legal responsibilities to ensure their child attends school regularly;

- Advise them that they are at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice;
- Advise them that a referral has been made to the Educational Welfare Service

4.10(i) In certain circumstances, the school may request that the Educational Welfare Service issue parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013. A warning letter will first be sent if:

- There have been 10 unauthorised sessions within one school term;
- A child has been late (after registration has closed) on 10 occasions within one school term;
- Parents/carers have failed to engage in attempts to improve attendance;
- The police have regularly found a pupil to be absent from school without an acceptable reason.

4.11(ii) A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued if:

- There is one further unauthorised absence within 15 school days of a warning letter having been issued;
- An unauthorised holiday is taken during term time (*note that no warning letter will be received*).

4.12 When the school feels that, despite its best efforts to support the family, attendance is not improving, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. A referral might be made when, for example:

- A pattern of irregular attendance has developed;
- A period of entrenched non-attendance has become established;
- There is a lack of parental cooperation in ensuring a child's regular attendance; or
- A pattern of truancy is persisting.

4.13 Mary Immaculate's cluster schools will liaise with the Education Welfare Service to provide the evidence required to prosecute parents who fail, without reasonable justification, to cause their child to attend school regularly, under sections 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.

## **5. Monitoring and evaluation**

5.1 All staff are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records for each pupil. Registration data and details of interventions and strategies are recorded using the relevant systems.

5.2 SAOs and other administrative staff produce detailed accounts pertaining to the attendance of pupils.

5.3 Attendance Officers meet regularly with relevant staff (e.g. HoY) to discuss individual cases of absenteeism, truancy or lateness with schools and across the cluster and reflect upon the effectiveness of interventions or actions to date. Decisions are taken, as appropriate, as to whether individual cases meet the criteria for referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

5.4 Attendance Officers meet with the Educational Welfare Officer as appropriate to review cases and seek support. The Educational Welfare Officer is responsible for contributing to each school's aim to improve attendance through the implementation of this Policy.

5.5 The Education Welfare Officer, with the Attendance Officers, conduct Register Audits on a regular basis as outlined by the Education Welfare Service.

5.6 Attendance data is reviewed regularly by the Senior Leadership Teams of the Mary Immaculate's cluster schools and is used to improve both the Self-Evaluation document and the School Improvement Plan.



