

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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MONITORING AND REVIEW

Person Responsible	Senior Deputy Head
Reviewed by	SLT
Approved by	SLT
Frequency of Review	Annually
Date of Last Review	September 2025
Date of Next Review	September 2026

The School refers to all staff and students in St Mary's School, which includes the Early Years/Foundations Stage (EYFS), the Preparatory Department (Years 1-6), Senior House (Years 7-11) and the Sixth Form (Years 12-13).

The term 'parent' refers to those who have parental responsibility for a child.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a partnership between the family and the School. St Mary's School is committed to providing the highest quality of education, and we look to parents and guardians to support us in fulfilling this objective by ensuring full and prompt attendance of all pupils at school.

St Mary's School believes that regular school attendance is key to enabling children to achieve their full potential. Attendance at school enables our pupils to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are ready to take their place in the world.

St Mary's School values all pupils, and we will always work with families to identify reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties through appropriate support.

WIDER REFERENCES

This policy operates within a wider national framework, which includes:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025
- Working together to improve school attendance February 2024
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance February 2023

RELATED POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Children Missing from Education
- Mental Health Policy
- Missing Child Policy

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND TARGETS

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school, attend regularly. Parents can only allow their child to miss school if they are too ill to go in or they have advance permission from the school. The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make it clear that Heads may only grant leave of absence *in exceptional circumstances*.

Parents should be aiming for their children to have a minimum attendance of 96%. If your child's attendance falls below 90% this will be followed up by St Mary's School, as will noticeable patterns, sudden or unexplained absence.

PARENTS RESPONSIBILITY

If your child is ill, parents should notify the school before 8.30am on the first day of absence by emailing absence@stmarysgx.co.uk or leaving a voice mail message. Parents should continue to do this for every day of continued absence so that the school can account for them. If a pupil is absent and the school is not aware of a valid reason, the office will email parents by 9.40am to alert parents that their child has not arrived at school, and follow up with a telephone call to ensure the child is accounted for and has not suffered an accident on the way to school. See Child Missing from Education Policy for further details.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil arrives after 9am or does not attend without a justifiable reason given by parents.

If your child is ill due to sickness or diarrhea, please note that they should not be attending school for 48 hours after their symptoms have cleared to reduce the chance of transmitting the virus.

Parents should note that they should make every effort to avoid making medical/dentist appointments during the school day. Other than in exceptional circumstances (e.g. bereavement) requests for absence for other reasons needs to be made in writing to the Head (absence@stmarysgx.co.uk) at least 2 weeks in advance to enable time for the Head to consider the request and discuss further with parents if required. This includes Sixth Form visits for university. Permission for leave of absence for the observance of religious festivals will always be granted but the request still needs to be made.

The school always sends parents term dates a year in advance so that holidays can be arranged without disruption to education. St Mary's School already has generous holidays and therefore parents should make every effort to avoid taking holidays during term time. Pupils are expected to participate in all activities at the start and end of terms such as induction days, team building days and House Competitions. In addition, pupils may be required to attend two Saturdays during the academic year for Open Day and Speech Day and, in addition, the Carol Service which takes place during the evening at the end of the Michaelmas Term. Parents should note that if their child is unable to attend these, a request for absence should be made in the same way as for any other school day.

Study leave is granted for Years 11, 12 and 13 pupils approaching GCSE/A level examinations or mock examinations, and Year 10 for School Examination week, for which parental consent is sought. There will always be provision in school for students to study. However, if it is felt that it is in the best interest of the student to study in school the Head of Year will make contact and discuss with parents.

ILLNESS

St Mary's School acknowledges that we all fall ill from time to time and that children may need to be at home to rest and recuperate fully. However, we also encourage parents to develop their child's resilience to cope with minor illnesses and acknowledge that being in the classroom is the best place to learn. We have a medical room at St Mary's School which is fully staffed at all times by trained staff. Should your child feel ill during the school day they should go to/be accompanied to the medical room where a member of staff will look after them. After some time out and appropriate medical support the pupil may feel that they are able to return to class and complete the school day. Should this not be the case a member of staff will contact parents to arrange for them to collect their child.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOLLOWING AN ABSENCE

Other than in exceptional circumstances due to prolonged periods of absence for an authorised medical reason, parents should note that if their daughter is not well enough to attend school, they should be resting in order to return to school as soon as they are well enough and school will not set any form of home learning or remote education.

Following an absence, pupils in Senior House are expected to catch up when they are well enough, and their teachers will support them to do this via an email or firefly task. However, it is the responsibility of the student to make contact with their teachers if they are not sure what they need to catch up on or do not understand the task.

MONITORING ATTENDANCE

St Mary's School recognises that absence can act as a warning sign of safeguarding issues such as neglect, child criminal and sexual exploitation and increases the risk of abuse, or of other Early Help support required for the child or family to improve the situation.

Form Tutors and Heads of Year monitor absence and punctuality carefully. Where an absence is of 3 consecutive school days or more, or attendance falls below 90% in a term and/or where there is a pattern of absence/lateness the Head of Year will make contact with parents to discuss any support/intervention required to support their daughter attending school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties that may affect their child's attendance so that school can work with them and their child to provide appropriate support.

St Mary's School understands that on occasions for exceptional reasons due to medical or mental health issues a pupil may need additional support/staggered timetables to enable their access to education. The Head of Year and/or DSL will work with the family to make any reasonable adjustments and to seek appropriate support if required. Support offered may include mentors, school counsellor or other external agencies such as family support services. Any support or intervention offered is child centered and planned in discussion and agreement with parents and the child. The support is closely monitored to ensure that there is an improvement in the situation, or take further advice/action should this not be the case. This may involve informing the local authority/children's services in cases where support has not been effective or parents have not engaged with the support offered.

For an absence of 10 consecutive days or more medical evidence (e.g. letter from the GP or hospital) is required.

Schools have a duty to report certain attendance issues; 10 days of unauthorised absence (absence other than for reasons of sickness or leave of absence) and failure to attend regularly. Where a child fails to return to school within 10 days after authorised leave of absence of 10 days or more, or after 20 school days of unauthorised absence, we would only delete a student's name from the register after having made reasonable enquiries as to the student's whereabouts, liaised with and referred to the local authority Children Missing from Education (CME). The school recognises that absence is a possible indicator of safeguarding concerns and therefore it is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to liaise with parents, carers and social care if the need arises. It is the responsibility of all Form Staff and the relevant office staff to monitor attendance and to alert the relevant pastoral staff and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) if there is a concern about the length of absence, pattern of absence or reasons given.

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

We work in partnership with families to:

- Expect – High standards of attendance
- Monitor – attendance data to identify patterns
- Listen and understand – pupils and parents, any barriers to attendance
- Facilitate support – to overcome barriers
- Formalise support – through an attendance contract
- Enforce – Protect the pupil's right to an education

REGISTRATION AND UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE

In order to monitor attendance, it is essential that the registers are accurate and that procedure is followed. It is the practice of this school to register all students (including those over and under compulsory school age) twice a day. This is done electronically on the school information management systems 'iSAMS' at the start of the morning and at the end of the afternoon session in both sections of the school. In addition, all Senior House teaching staff take an electronic register each lesson. The Prep Department staff check that all students are present each lesson.

Morning registers are closed at 8.40am. Any student arriving after 8.40am will be required to sign in on the Inventory System at Reception, explaining the reason for their lateness.

The register must record whether the student is:

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved educational activity

APPROVED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY

An 'approved educational activity' is defined as:

- a) One taking place off the school premises
- b) Approved by a person authorised by the Governing Body or the Head
- c) Supervised by a person approved by the Governing Body or the Head
- d) Being of an educational nature, including work experience, field trips and educational visits, interviews with prospective employers, or for a place in Higher or Further Education.

When a student of compulsory school age is absent it must be marked as 'authorised' if leave of absence is approved or granted, or if a suitable reason is provided by a parent. If this is not the case, it will be marked as an 'unauthorised' absence.

PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS

Senior House Pupils may arrive at school from 7.45am, Prep pupils may arrive from 7.30am. On arrival at school in Senior House they need to sign in at reception and indicate whether they are going to their Form Room, the library or Breakfast Club in the dining room. In the Prep Department, girls attending either the EYFS or Years 1 – 6 Breakfast Club are registered by a member of staff on arrival.

All pupils are required to be in school by 8.30am. Registration takes place at 8.35am. Any pupil arriving after 8.40am will be marked as late. Students arriving late should sign in on the Inventory System at Reception.

Afternoon registration takes place at 3.45pm and pupils can leave school from 3.50pm, although many pupils remain later to take part in co-curricular activities or extra classes under the supervision of a member of staff. Alternatively, they may attend The Hub in the Prep Department or Supervised Prep in Senior House until 6pm.

With the exception of pupils in Years 12 and 13, pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day unless their parents have written in to request absence for a valid reason (e.g. medical appointment) or are on an approved educational trip or fixture.

MORNING REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

1. Form Tutor completes ISAMS register at the designated time. If there is problem with ISAMS registration staff should complete a paper copy from the Office or email the list of girls to the Attendance Officer via the 'absence@' email.
2. Any notes from parents in homework diaries or via email should be shared with the attendance officer via the 'absence@' email
3. The morning receptionist checks the registers, any contact from parents via email or phone and informs absence@ and relevant staff
4. A list of students who are absent without explanation is produced and emailed to the unaccounted group
5. The Attendance Officer will double check to see if the student has arrived in school. If this is not the case, they will email parents by 9.30am at the latest to alert them that their child has not arrived at school and then will follow up with a phone call if no response is received. A minimum of two contact numbers are held for every student
6. The Attendance Officer records the reason for absence
7. If the student is still unaccounted for the Attendance Officer will continue to call and e-mail, including all emergency contacts, until the absence is accounted for. The Head, Deputy Head and the relevant Head of Section/Year in Senior House or The Head of Prep in the Prep Department will be alerted, and records double checked
8. If the Attendance Officer is still unable to make contact with the relevant parent and the student is in Year 6 or above, staff will enquire of her friends to see if they are aware of any reason for the absence without causing alarm. However, this is only to inform further action and cannot be used to authorise the absence
9. If by 10.30am the student remains unaccounted for the Attendance Officer will inform the DSL. The Head and DSL will consider if it is appropriate to make a home visit and/or contact emergency services or social care. If the student is already known to social care, they must be informed

ABSENCE NOTES

An absence note must be obtained even if a phone call was received. An e-mail is also acceptable. The Form Tutor must be informed about any absence notes that go directly to reception. If there is difficulty in obtaining a note for any reason Form Tutors should ask reception to contact the parents.



Staff are reminded that any requests for absence for any reason other than medical, dental or orthodontic appointments must be authorised by the Head. All such request should be passed to absence@stmarysgx.co.uk. All 'authorised' absences will be recorded on the information management system 'iSAMS'.