



Attendance Policy

Rationale / Statement of Intent

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital for children to be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good habits being embedded.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show us a direct correlation between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- It allows continuity of learning which makes progress and cognitive retention easier.
- Socially it allows school routines, work and friendships easier to cope with.
- Regular attenders are more successful in transition between primary and secondary school. It is therefore vital if pupils are to achieve their full educational potential.
- Forming good habits for later life.

Parents

Parents obviously play a very important part in developing good attendance records and are asked to cooperate fully by:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly, unless there be very good reason why they should not do so.

- Helping the child to be punctual at all times.
- Not allowing the child to have time off for minor complaints or illnesses; if the child is well enough to be up and about, they are generally well enough to attend school.
- Notifying the school as early as possible, if absence is unavoidable (illness, etc.).
- Seeking any required leave of absence well in advance of the date concerned by application in writing to the Principal.
- Trying to book any medical or dental appointments in out of school hours or at the very end of the day.
- Avoiding taking holidays in term-time, unless there be no alternative.*

School

In return, the School will:

- Actively promote attendance and punctuality and discourage absence (Badge system).
- Keep an attendance register. Inform the authority of persistent absences (less than 90% attendance) and severe (less than 50% attendance).
- Attendance data will be analysed regularly and concerns will be reported to both parents and the Governing Body.
- Follow up immediately on any un-notified absence and monitor patterns of absence on Scholarpack.
- Discuss with parents any prolonged absence or any irregular attendance.
- Make arrangements, in the case of illness, to recover from work lost after three days.

Persistent Non-Attendance

Persistent absence is when a child's attendance falls below 90%. If during school attendance analysis, a child's attendance falls below 90% the parents/carers will be contacted and asked to explain the child's attendance.

1. A meeting/consultation will occur which may result in an actions plan being drawn up.
2. Requests for medical information or information from other services may be requested.
3. Use of local authority enforcement processes and procedures may be implemented.

Children missing education (CME)

KCSIE has been updated for 2023 with a clearer distinction between: Children absent from education and Children missing education. CME is defined as those who are of a compulsory

school age but are either not registered at a school or else not receiving suitable education in place of a school setting. CME may be at a significant risk of: not meeting their academic potential and underachieving. DSL will contact LA and if safeguarding issues the MASH Team informed.

In Term Holidays

*Holiday leave (usually a maximum of one week, i.e. 5 school days) will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Any application for such leave should be made to the principal, with as much notice as possible. In every case, the parent(s) will be required to discuss the matter with the principal.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Failure to fulfil this duty may result in the local authority prosecuting the parents.

"If a school does not authorize a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorized."

Parents do not have any right or entitlement to expect term time leave to be granted and all leave is granted at the discretion of the principal. Leave for the purpose of a family holiday will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. If leave is taken without authorisation, it will be recorded in the school attendance register as unauthorised absence, that is as truancy.

The principal reserves the right to make individual judgements as to what constitutes exceptional circumstances, which might include the following:

- A parent or grandparent is seriously/terminally ill, and the holiday proposed could be the last such holiday.
- There has recently been a death or other significant trauma in the family, and it is felt that an immediate holiday might help the child concerned better deal with the situation.
- The holiday is a unique one off never to be repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested.
- There are wellbeing issues within the family.

As a rule, the financial factor when a parent claims that they are unable to afford a holiday during school holidays when prices may be significantly higher than in term time, should not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Similarly, the nature of the proposed holiday should not be taken as exceptional

circumstances, although again, it is acknowledged that individual Principals may have their own view and perspectives on this and may choose to respond in the light of those.

When an application is made, we will not usually grant leave if:

- A child's attendance record over the previous 20-week period is less than 95% - even if any previous absence was due to unavoidable causes such as illness.
- The period of leave coincides with the start of term, or is near to or coincides with tests, SATs, other assessments, or other significant events in the school calendar.

When leave is granted, it will normally be for one holiday in any one school year (up to five days).

As Principal at St Mary's, I personally feel that there should be flexibility. Recent High Court cases have not established hard and fast rules, so it would seem that; professionalism and common sense should be the prevailing factors in the granting of holidays.

Date Implemented: 1st January 2024

Approved by: Laura Scrivens Chair of Governors

Person Responsible: Peter Kyles Principal

Review Date: 1st January 2026

This policy takes into consideration

- Section 436A of the Education Act 1996.
- Section 444 of the Education Act 1996
- Pupil Registration Regulation 2016.
- Children Missing in Education (CME) statutory guidance September 2016. KCSE 2023/24 updates.