

# The Cathedral School of St. Mary



## Pupil Attendance Policy 2023

### Mission Statement

As a Catholic School it is our mission to provide a safe caring environment in which to educate our children to lead full lives as Christians; to instil a love of learning, of self and of others; enabling all to recognise their God given gifts and to realise their potential.

**Policy agreed:** January 2023

**Review date:** January 2025

## **Introduction:**

To achieve our Mission Statement at The Cathedral School of St Mary, it is essential that children attend school whenever they can. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. We need to be sure that our children are safe. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that parents make sure that their child attends regularly and this policy sets out how, as school and family together, we will achieve this.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital all children are at school, on time, every day the school is open. 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 attendance.

## **To achieve these aims the school has:**

- Attendance targets
- A committed and passionate attendance team who meet regularly to monitor and review attendance
- A policy of celebrating good attendance through reporting back to parents throughout the year
- A clear policy and procedure on authorising leave, including holiday absences
- A thorough practice for recording and reviewing punctuality and lateness
- A clear course of action for first-day contact between parent and school, whenever a child is absent
- A comprehensive and detailed procedure for taking formal action where a child's attendance is unsatisfactory.

This policy reflects the DfE's guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1099677/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf)

## **EXPECT**

At The Cathedral School, we hold high expectations for all of our children and families to attend school regularly and on time. We strive to create a culture where attendance is celebrated so that all of our children can achieve their full potential. Below sets out our expectations for positive attendance.

### **Morning Session**

The school day starts at **8:30am** when the school doors open to welcome our children into the school building. The main school doors and gate will remain open until **8:50am**. Any child who arrives later than **8:50am** will be marked as late and will need to sign in at the school office. Any child who arrives later than **9:15am** will be marked as unauthorised lateness (U) for the morning session.

### **Afternoon sessions**

The school's afternoon sessions commence as follows.

**Foundation-** 12:45pm

**Years 1 and 2-** 12:45pm

**Years 3-6-** 1:00pm

The school day ends at;

**Foundation** 3:10pm.

**Years 1-6** 3:15pm

**Authorised/unauthorised absence**

All parents must explain why their child has been absent and the school will determine whether we are able to authorise the absence. The table below outlines the criteria for authorised and unauthorised absence (this list is not exhaustive).

<b><u>Authorised absence</u></b>	<b><u>Unauthorised absence</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illness</li> <li>• Medical appointments</li> <li>• School arranged transport that hasn't turned up on time</li> <li>• Unavoidable cause (this means an unusual/extraordinary event that couldn't be avoided)</li> <li>• A specified, limited period for an immediate family member's bereavement, crisis or serious illness</li> <li>• A funeral of an immediate family member</li> <li>• Religious observance (you'll need authorisation from the school at least four weeks before the event)</li> <li>• A specified, limited period for children of service personnel about to go on deployment (you'll need to provide a letter from the Commanding Officer as evidence)</li> <li>• One day for a wedding of an immediate family member (you'll need to provide the invitation as evidence)</li> <li>• One day for an immediate family members graduation ceremony/passing out parade (you'll need to provide the invitation as evidence)</li> <li>• A one-off sporting events/performing arts competition if your child is participating and is at county standard or above (you'll need to provide a letter from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birthdays, if ill on a birthday medical evidence will be required</li> <li>• Shopping</li> <li>• Caring for other family members</li> <li>• Visiting relatives</li> <li>• Mild colds or illnesses.</li> <li>• To interpret for family members</li> <li>• Having no school uniform/shoes</li> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Friendship problems</li> <li>• Head lice</li> <li>• Learning difficulties</li> <li>• Family holiday</li> <li>• Weddings abroad (even if it's immediate family)</li> <li>• Family anniversaries</li> <li>• Death of a pet</li> <li>• Travel problems</li> <li>• Attending immigration interviews with parents or guardian</li> <li>• Moving to a new house</li> <li>• School refusal</li> <li>• Lateness after the school's registration period</li> </ul>

**Reporting absence by parents/carers.**

On the 1st day of absence, parents/carers should call the school or use the dedicated absence line to report their child's absence by **9:15am** giving a full reason for your child's absence (including symptoms), their name and class. In some cases we will call straight away if your child is not in school.



On the 3rd day of absence, parents/carers should reconfirm their child's absence from school by calling the school or using the dedicated absence line by **9:15am** giving an update on symptoms for our records.

**All absences must be reported to the school.**

**What parents can expect from the school.**

If parents have not been in touch with the school, they will receive a text between **9:30-10:00am** to request information as to why their child is absent (if they have not already alerted the school)



If parents have not responded to the text message by **10:15am** to give information as to why their child is absent, the school will phone parents/carers directly.



If the school has not heard from parents/carers and the child remains off school, calls will be made to all contacts that are on the system to find out why the child has not attended. If the school has safeguarding concerns, a home visit referral may be made on the same day.



If your child has not returned the next day and we still haven't heard from you, we will visit the house to check.

If we do not get an answer from the house call, a referral to MASH (Plymouth Social Care Gateway) may be made if the school has concerns about the



If your child returns to school the next day, we will contact parents/carers to provide a reason for their absence.

Or

welfare of the pupil.

If your child's absence drops below 90%, we will refer the matter to the Plymouth City Council Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

If a child has two lates (before or after the register has closed) within a week, parent/carers will receive a text at the end of the week alerting them to this and requesting immediate improvement.

If a child is absent from school for three days in a row, medical evidence will be requested in order to authorise the absence.

### Requesting absence

#### Term Time Absence

As from the 1st September 2013, all schools are unable to authorise any requests for absence relating to holidays being taken in term time. This has been brought about by an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, which has removed reference to holidays and the ten day period. The amendments make it clear that Head Teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

These changes to the law reinforce the government's view following the "Taylor Report" on attendance, that regular school attendance is vital and that pupils should only be granted authorised absence by the school, in exceptional circumstances, e.g. illness, exclusions or due to other unavoidable causes. Parents/Carers need to be aware that, irrespective of previous attendance, any unauthorised absence resulting from holiday taken in term time may well result in Plymouth City Council instigating parent responsibility measures which could lead to a penalty notice, or a fine being issued. This takes the form of a £60 fine, per parent, per child, rising to £120 if not paid in the first 21 days.

## Monitor

Leaders and administrative team, in order to identify pupils whose attendance is causing a concern, persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees, monitor attendance on a 2-weekly basis. (Persistent absentees are pupils who have missed 19 days which equates to 38 sessions during the course of the academic year, which equates to an attendance percentage of 90% or below). Absences may be unauthorised by the school where no reason has been provided by the parent/carer for an absence or if the school feels the reason for the absence is untrue. The Parent Support Advisor may telephone parents/carers for clarification of the absence.

Each child's attendance will be reviewed and discussed on an **individual case by case basis** by senior leaders and the administrative team, however where a pupil's attendance is causing concern the following actions will be taken:

#### **Class Teacher message on dojo- reminder about attendance.**

Where children's attendance falls **below 94%**, the class teacher will share a message with parents on Class Dojo alerting them. This will initially be a reminder about the importance of attending school regularly and will offer an opportunity for parents to meet with the class teacher should they require support around attendance.

**Closely monitored attendance**-Where attendance or persistent lateness is causing a concern, children will be closely tracked over several weeks by senior leaders. Where necessary, the school may invite Parents or Carers into school for an informal meeting with the Parent Support Advisor (PSA) or a senior leader to discuss how to improve and overcome barriers.

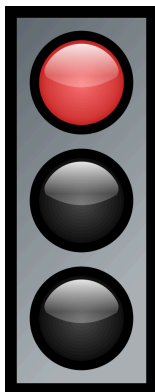
**Attendance letter 2 (Red Warning)** will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 90%. Parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher/Parent Support Advisor to discuss their child's attendance.

a < 90%	90 < a < 96%	a>96%
Red EWO involvement	Parent Support Advisor (PSA) to make contact to make aware and offer support.	No action. A letter will be sent home offering praise for good attendance.

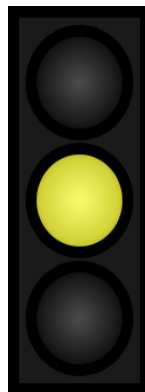
All persistently absent pupils will be monitored for improvement.

### Termly attendance letter

Each child will receive a letter termly which will notify parents of their child's attendance percentage. The letters which will be sent out will be based on a traffic light system as shown below.



Your child's attendance is below 90%



Your child's attendance is between 90% and 96%.



Your child's attendance is 96% or greater.

### Illness

We recognise that pupils become ill from time to time. Some illnesses do not require time off school (like a cold, for example), whereas some do (diarrhoea, sickness). We can provide parents/carers with advice and support if you are unsure as to whether your child should be having time off school. If you require further guidance on if you should send your child to school with an illness, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities/children-and-young-people-settings-tools-and-resources#exclusion-table>

Medical evidence will be requested where a child has been absent for 3 consecutive days or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below 95% and/or the child is regularly away from school due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. Medical evidence can be in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication, an appointment card/text or E-Consult notification showing the name of the child and date they visited. If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, evidence should be provided. Referral to School Nurse/Family Support may be made to offer advice and support to the family.

### Medical/dental appointments

All routine (non-emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a child need to have an appointment during school hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school un-authorising the absence. All non-emergency appointments will not be authorised. Appointments made on behalf of the pupil patient will be authorised with appropriate appointment letter/confirmation.

### **Lateness**

There are examples of the negative results caused by pupils who constantly arrive late. These are:

- The loss of education suffered by the child which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.
- Disruption to their social and emotional development due to not being in school at the key meet and greet times.
- Experiencing a lack of routine or lack of understanding about school routines
- Missing out on the key settling time of the day and interactions with their peers and adults
- Always missing the same lessons or same parts of lessons.

### **The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:**

- Pupils who arrive between 8:51am and 9:14am are considered 'Late' (L) and will be required to enter the school via reception to sign in and record the reason for their late arrival.
- Children who arrive after 9:15am are considered as 'Late after registers close' (O - unauthorised absence).
- Registration staff will record the appropriate late mark in the registers, and these will be entered into the computerised attendance programme.
- All children's attendance records will be checked fortnightly for 'lates before registers close (L)' and 'lates after registers close (O)'.

### **Late texts and letters.**

A text will be sent to parents if a child has 2 lates recorded within a week. A Late Letter will be sent if there are 4 or more lates (before and after the register closes) over a 2 week period. Lates will be reviewed fortnightly and a red attendance letter will be sent to parents/carers if no improvement is seen.

### **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

**Attendance in the year 2019 - 20** was significantly affected by Covid.

**Attendance in the year 2020 - 21** was 94.76%.

**Attendance in the year 2021- 22** was 92.10%

**Attendance in the year 2022-23** was 94.1%

**Our target for 2023-24** is: 96 and above%

As a school, we strive to create a culture where attendance is recognised and celebrated amongst our children and families, therefore we will celebrate and support the improvement of attendance in the following ways.

**Breakfast**- All children will have access to half a bagel for breakfast from the school playground from 8:30am daily.

### **Group**

- When a class has achieved 10 attendance stars, they will receive a trip to the park.

### **Individual-**

- Green letters will be sent to children whose attendance is 96% or more to congratulate them for positive attendance.
- Children who have an attendance percentage of 96% or more will be entered into a half termly draw with the chance of winning a prize.

### **Community**

- Where there is an improvement in attendance, the school will send out congratulatory letters.
- Parents and families whose children have attendance of 96% or more will have the opportunity to win a £10 voucher.

## **LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

We will always work with parents/carers to support positive attendance habits. When we identify a pattern of poor attendance or where parents/carers have their own concerns we have a whole team of people able and ready to support. Parents/carers will be contacted by, or can make contact with, the following members of the team to discuss attendance and ways we can move forward positively together.

- Parent Support Advisor
- Attendance Officer and Administration team
- SENDCo
- Headteacher
- Class teacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Support staff
- Education Welfare Officers within the Local Authority

**If you wish to speak to a member of the senior leadership team regarding attendance, please contact:**

**Mr Darren Moore**

**Strategic Lead for improving attendance**

**d.moore@plymouthcast.com**

We will work with you to identify the current barriers to attendance and agree how we can work together to move forward and see improvements.



Each parent will receive a copy of their child's attendance percentages termly and at the end of the year. The school attendance policy and procedures will be published on the school website. Any parent can request their own child's attendance figures at any time. The school will be happy to provide that information in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Parents will receive a termly attendance ladder letter stating their child's current attendance and where their child's current attendance sits on the ladder.

## **FACILITATE SUPPORT**

We recognise that poor attendance can be the result of a number of different issues – these are the barriers to your child being in school on time every day. The school will work closely with families to identify the barriers that they face and will offer or signpost further support to help in removing these barriers. **The law is clear that every child of compulsory school age is entitled to efficient, full-time education suitable to their age. In addition, the law is clear that parents/carers who decide to enrol their child in a registered school have a legal duty to ensure their child attends regularly.** Therefore, we will work with families in a variety of ways to support them in establishing and maintaining improving positive attendance.

This might include (however, support will always be personalised to the individual family):

- Signposting to other agencies or organisations
- Completing a voluntary Early Help assessment to access the support needed and set clear targets for the family
- Working together to set attendance targets as part of an Attendance Improvement Plan
- Consideration of other education providers who could provide outreach support
- Carrying out further assessments of need for the pupil
- Formal meetings with the Headteacher to review attendance and set manageable targets

## **FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support has not been effective in improving attendance, the school will work with the Local Authority to decide on the best next steps for the family. This might include:

- Referrals to the Education Welfare Team at the Local Authority
- Introducing a parenting contract
- Introducing an education supervision order
- Issuing a fixed penalty notice
- Involvement of social care (where there are also safeguarding concerns)
- Moving towards prosecution, where all other avenues of support have failed to improve attendance

## **ENFORCE**

If you fail to make sure your child attends school regularly (even if they're missing school without your knowledge), you may be issued with a penalty notice (a fine for children who miss school without authorisation) or subject to a criminal prosecution. A penalty notice of £60 may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. This rises to £120 if you don't pay within 21 days. Failure to pay within 28 days will normally lead to prosecution.

**We can issue a penalty notice if:**

- your child has eight or more unauthorised absences from school over a six month period (eight absences are equal to four school days as there are two sessions in a school day)
- your child has been late to school after registration has closed eight or more times over a 6-month period
- your child is found during a truancy sweep and the absence hasn't been authorised by the school, and there are already eight previous unauthorised absences
- you repeatedly fail to provide the school or our Inclusion, Attendance and Welfare Service reasons for your child's absences (this includes ignoring our attempts to contact you)
- your child is found in a public place during the first five days of a fixed term suspension or permanent exclusion