St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Achieving Ambitions

ATTENDANCE POLICY

We guide our pupils on to the path to achieving their ambitions.

On their journey, they **Love** one another, **Learn** to achieve excellence, **Laugh** through enriching experiences and **Live** life to the full.

Drafted by	Senior Leadership Team
Approved by Governors	
Reviewed	Autumn 2025
Next Reviewed	Autumn 2026

"attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils"

Working together to improve school attendance: DfE 2022

Statement of Intent

St Mary's believes that regular school attendance is essential in enabling pupils to achieve their full potential.

Our objective is to:

- Ensure parents/carers follow the framework set out in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age, shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Promote and model good attendance behaviour.
- Implement our policies to reflect inclusivity and fairness in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Offer early intervention support and work with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.

The Law on School Attendance

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to receive a full-time education, it is the legal responsibility of every parent/carer to ensure this. Where parents/carers decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly and punctually, meaning that their child must attend every day that the school is open. There are a few exceptions, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
(applies from 19th August 2024)

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (legislation.gov.uk)
(applies from 19th August 2024)

Definitions

Authorised Absence (this list is not limited to)**:**

- An absence for sickness
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time
- Religious or cultural observances for days set aside by a religious body, for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency, taken with the school's permission

Unauthorised absence (this list is not limited to)**:**

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy during the school day
- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the close of registration
- Absence due to unofficial responsibilities at home
- Absence due to birthdays
- Absence due to term-time trips and holidays that have not been authorised by the school
- Leaving school without reason/the school's permission during the day

Attendance Scales

97% and above	**Excellent**
96% and above	**Good**
Below 95%	**Room for improvement**
Below 94%	**Requires Improvement**
Below 92%	**At risk of being a cause for concern (Classified as Persistently Absent)**
Below 90%	**Cause for concern**

Persistent absenteeism:

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling during the academic year, for any reason

Severe absenteeism:

- Missing 50 percent or more of schooling during the academic year, for any reason

Working in partnership to improve attendance.

Addressing the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with families:

EXPECT
Promote high standards of attendance and build a culture where everyone across the school prioritises attendance improvement.



MONITOR
Make use of attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND
When an absence pattern is identified, discuss with pupils and parents/carers to understand, and address barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to improve attendance.



FACILITATE SUPPORT
Remove barriers in school and help families to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This may involve referrals to external agencies for further support (for example FDFF).



FORMALISE SUPPORT
Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly to families. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through an attendance contract.



ENFORCE
Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Parent/Carer involvement

The school will strive to build positive and respectful relationships with parents/carers to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance, and performance, so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

Parents/carers will be expected to:

- Build positive and respectful relationships with school staff
- Engage with school support when offered
- Call staff for help when needed – First Point of Contact – Office Team
- Communicate with the school about possible circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or require support
- Inform the school of any change of address and ensure contact details are up-to-date

Attendance expectations at St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Punctuality

Children are expected to be at school every day, on time.

The register is taken 15 minutes after the doors open.

Doors Open	Gates Close	End of School Day
8:40am	8:50am	3:10pm

Registers are taken as follows throughout the school day:

- Registers are marked by **09.00am**. Pupils will receive a late mark ('L' code - late) if they are not in their classroom by this time
- The register closes at **9:20am**. Pupils will receive a mark of absence ('U' code – unauthorised absence) if they do not attend school before this time.
- After lunch, registers are marked within **5 minutes of returning to class from lunch**. Pupils will receive a late mark ('L') if they are not in their classroom by this time, or an absence mark if they are late ('U').

Any children arriving late must enter the school via the front office with their parent/carer and the check process must be completed.

Sickness

If children are too unwell to attend school, parents/carers must contact the school office on 01273 418416 on the first day of absence by 9:30 and then each school day thereafter. Children with low-level illness are still expected to attend school. The traffic light guidance below may help you decide if your child is well enough to come into school. Please also see NHS guidance here: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/

If your child has a medical condition that could impact school attendance, please let us know. There may be support that we can offer.

RED – STAY AT HOME	AMBER – COME TO SCHOOL AND COMMUNICATE WITH STAFF	GREEN – COME TO SCHOOL
Sickness & Diarrhoea 48 hours must have elapsed before a child can return to school from the last episode.	**Headache, Feeling Sick, Stomach Ache** Children often feel unwell if they are anxious, if in doubt contact the school for advice.	**Mild cough, Cold, Sore Throat, Feeling Tired** We will always contact you if your child is ill during the school day

If your child is ill, please inform the school by:

- Calling 01273 418416
- Emailing office@stmarys.brighton-hove.sch.uk

Appointments

In accordance with DfE guidance, routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged outside of school hours wherever possible. If the appointment time allows your child to come to school for registration and then leave later, this will mean that less school is missed. Your child should return to school straight after their appointment wherever possible.

Term time holidays

The DfE statutory guidance states that “Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation, to be an exceptional circumstance.” It also states that “a school cannot grant leave of absence retrospectively.”

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are where requests are rare, significant, unavoidable and short.

For term-time absence to be granted:

a) Permission must be requested at least two weeks before the absence begins.

b) Permission must be requested by the parent/carer who the pupil normally lives with.

c) A parent/carer must explain in writing/by completing a Leave of Absence request form (Appendix A) why they believe the circumstances to be exceptional and provide all necessary evidence to the school at the time the request is made.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to provide evidence when making the request.

If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

A term-time absence taken without the school's written permission may trigger a Fixed Penalty Notice, which is issued by the Local Authority.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The national threshold for triggering a Fixed Penalty Notice is met when a pupil has been recorded as having had unauthorised absence for 10 or more sessions (5 or more school days) in a period of 10 school weeks. One or a combination of the following codes count as unauthorised absence:

- G-codes (unauthorised term-time holiday)
- N-codes (no reason yet provided for absence)
- O-codes (unauthorised absence)
- U-codes (lateness after close of registration)

The first fine is £160 *per parent/carer per child,* if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

If a second fine is issued to that parent/carer within a period of 3 school years, the fine is £160 *per parent/carer per child* to be paid within 28 days and there is no reduction if paid within 21 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same child, within 3 years of the first fine being issued. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action could be taken, such as prosecution.

There is no right of appeal once a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, so disputes over how an absence is classified must be settled with the school before the absence is taken.

Full details relating to Fixed Penalty Notice amounts and thresholds can be found in the Code of Conduct on the Brighton & Hove City Council website.
(See appendix B for Code of Conduct on the Brighton & Hove City Council)

Religious observances

Absence can be granted on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body the parents/carers belong to. Parents/carers must have requested and secured permission from the school in advance.

Modelling, sport and acting performances/activities

Parents/carers of pupils that will be taking part in entertainment/performances, (i.e. modelling, TV, films, theatre, etc) which require them to be absent from school, must obtain permission from the school before a child performance licence can be issued. The agent, organiser or parent/carer will usually be the person who requests the absence from the school. Further information regarding licensing legislation can be found here: England Performance Legislation - NNCEE - National Network for Children in Employment & Entertainment. For more information, please visit Brighton & Hove City Council's website: Apply for a child performance licence (brighton-hove.gov.uk) or contact childperformancelicensing@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

Young carers

Schools will provide a caring and flexible approach to support the needs of young carers, to help maintain regular attendance at school. Further support from other agencies will be sought, if appropriate.

First day absence protocols

On the first day of absence, parents/carers must contact the school via email or phone by 9:30am on 01273 418416

School will contact parents/carers of any child who does not arrive at school after the close of registration, to confirm the reason for absence. Further safeguarding action will be taken if necessary. For example, if we cannot get hold of you, we will likely come and visit you at home to see if everything is ok.

Schools will check emails for any notifications of pupil absence and will update registers with reasons for absence.

Attendance Contacts

Please contact the school 01273 418416 or office@stmarys.brighton-hove.sch.uk to discuss any potential support that can be offered.

For details of staff roles and responsibilities, please see our school website or contact the school office on 01273 418416

Class Teachers

(See Appendix C for school Attendance Tier System)

- Teachers take the attendance register **at the start of each school day** (by 09.00am) and **at the start of the afternoon session** (by 1:20pm). This register will record whether a pupil is present or absent.

Attendance Champion Mrs Parsons

- Attendance Champion contact details office@stmarys.brighton-hove.sch.uk
- Responsible for improving and maintaining good attendance, establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, ensuring they are followed by all staff
- Responsible for regularly monitoring and evaluating progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes
- Ensures the Attendance Policy is fully implemented
- Conducts home visits for any child who is absent for 3 or more consecutive days without a valid reason
- Ensure there is a whole school approach to improving attendance. This could include an 'Attendance display' and regular attendance items in Newsletters
- Work closely with School attendance support and education welfare service link (Jackie Storey) to support families with attendance where needed.

Attendance Officer (Office Staff)

The Attendance Officer will:

- Check email, phone messages and absence reporting systems and update registers accordingly
- Oversee first day absence protocols
- Oversee attendance processes
- Conduct attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance and provide additional support
- Provide parents/carers with 'Leave of Absence Request Forms' when requested
- Ensure attendance processes are integrated throughout the school
- Maintain an attendance tracking system
- Verify that a parent/carer's contact details are up to date

Where a pupil at risk of Persistent Absenteeism (PA) is also at an increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. Social Services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care.

The Local Authority

- Has an Attendance Team that work with schools in the city to help identify barriers to attendance when necessary

- Monitors local attendance data
- Offers opportunities for schools in each area to share best practice
- Can provide information/signposting for support services for pupils identified as persistently or severely absent (or at risk of becoming so)
- Works jointly with the school to provide formal support options and legal processes
- Will, where there are safeguarding concerns, facilitate joint working between the school, children's social care and other statutory safeguarding partners where necessary
- Can, where support is not appropriate (e.g. term time holidays) or being engaged with, enforce attendance through legal intervention and Fixed Penalty Notices

The School Governing Body which has an attendance link will:

- Work with senior leaders to set strategic goals or areas of focus for school attendance, providing support, and challenge, where necessary
- Review attendance data at board meetings (including school-level trends and benchmarking with other schools)
- Pay particular attention to pupil cohorts that have poor attendance, have had poor attendance historically, or face entrenched barriers to attendance. For example, pupils:
    - With a social worker
    - From a background where attendance has been a concern
    - With a long-term medical condition
    - With special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
    - With Free School Meals eligibility
- Analyse the school's absence and attendance rates

Teachers

Teachers receive 3 weekly updates on attendance for children in their class so they are aware of who is persistently absent (below 90%) and at risk of becoming persistently absent (90-94%). Teachers update parents on their childs attendance at each parents evening and will have conversations with parents when attendance drops below 95% (along with Letter 1 which will be sent home).

Staff training

All school staff are expected to promote a focus on attendance and recognise the importance of early intervention. As part of their induction and refresher training, staff will be able to identify potentially "at-risk" pupils and understand that absence can indicate wider issues requiring support. If support is unsuccessful or not engaged with, all staff will be aware of escalation processes.

Pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA)

The school will ensure it offers support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary.

Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is **96 %**

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the attendance champion. The next scheduled review date for this policy is **September 2026**.

Appendix A

Term-time Leave of Absence Request Form

Requests for leave of absence during term time can only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Generally, the Department of Education does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Any supporting evidence must be supplied at the time this application is submitted.

Please complete this form stating the dates of absence, and detailing the reasons why this absence can only be taken during term time.

The application must be received by the school office two or more school weeks before the first day of absence. In rare cases, where this may not be possible, please contact the school office directly on: office@stmarys.brighton-hove.sch.uk

Permission must be requested and secured before taking any planned absence during term time. If permission is not secured and absence is taken without permission, the Local Authority will issue each parent(s)/carer(s) with a penalty notice, for every absent pupil. The first penalty notice issued to parent/carer in respect of a particular pupil, will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same pupil, within 3 years of the date of issue of the first penalty notice, is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent/carer, in respect of the same pupil, within 3 years of the date of issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action can be taken, including considering prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

More information about the school's attendance policy can be found on our website:
Attendance – St Mary's Catholic Primary School (stmarys.brighton-hove.sch.uk)

If you are unable to access our website, please speak to the school office who can provide you with a paper copy of the policy.

Name of Child(ren):	Forename(s):	Surname(s):	Year Group/Classes:
Names of sibling(s) and school attending:			
Name of Parent(s) / Carer(s):	Forename:	Surname:	Relationship:
	Forename:	Surname:	Relationship:
Home Address(es):	Postcode:		
Contact telephone number(s) and e-mail address(es):	Telephone/Mobile No.:	Email Address:	
Reason for leave (attach further information as necessary):			

First Day of Absence:	DD	MM	YY	**Last day of absence:**	DD	MM	YY	**Total no. of days missed (excluding weekends and bank holidays):**	

Signed: Dated:

By signing this document, I am confirming that I have read and understood the above notice.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Pupil(s) Forename:	**Pupil(s) Surname:**	**Class(es):**	**Attendence:**
Authorised: ☐	**Unauthorised:** ☐	**FPN Issued:** ☐	
Date of response:	**Method used to respond to parent:**		
Additional information/comments:			
Signed by Headteacher:	**Dated:**		

Appendix B

Brighton & Hove City Council Code of Conduct for the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices .Effective from 19 August 2024

Purpose

This Code of Conduct was drafted in accordance with the Department for Education's new national framework for Fixed Penalty Notices which aims to achieve a more consistent approach across the country. The code describes how Fixed Penalty Notices are issued by Brighton and Hove City Council in line with the current guidance. Working together to improve school attendance DfE guidance 2024.This guidance is statutory and came into effect on 19 August 2024. The changes introduced a national threshold for Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences and increased the Penalties to be paid. This Code of Conduct reflects those changes and has been drawn up in consultation with headteachers and governing bodies of state-funded schools and the local police force.

What are Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)?

Fixed Penalty Notices are fines issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution if a child is of compulsory school age and parents have failed to ensure that their child regularly attends the school where they are registered (or, in certain cases, a place where alternative provision is provided).

What is the legal basis for issuing FPNs?

It is a legal requirement under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 that parents ensure that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education that is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs. Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. They can only be issued in relation to children of compulsory school age.

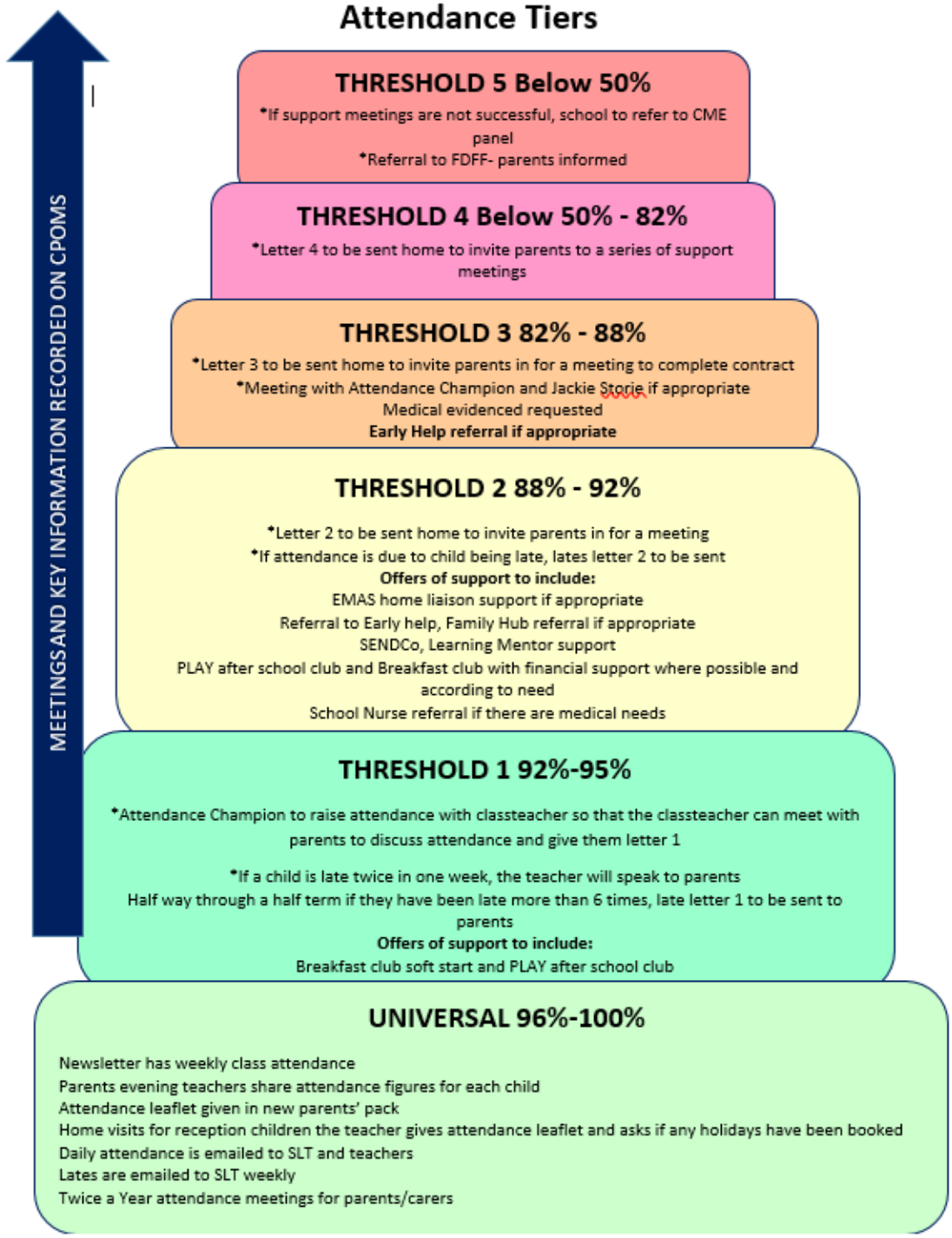
The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (and subsequent amendments) set out how Penalty Notices for school absence must be used. The national framework for such Penalty Notices is contained in the statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance'.

The legislation that relates to Fixed Penalty Notices for child present in a public place during an Exclusion is section 105 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

How is the term "parent" defined?

The term "parent" does not have to refer to a biological parent. It includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices will usually be issued to the parent(s) as defined above with day-to-day responsibility for the child's attendance (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

Appendix C



Panel meetings for family leave requests:
Executive Head, Deputy Head, Assistant Head, Two Governors
Medical proof required if child absence due to illness is 10 sessions or more consecutively.