

**St Michael's CE Primary School
Sydenham**



**Attendance Policy
Including Children Missing in Education**

Agreed by the Governing Body on: *Spring 2024*

Signed (Chair): *Beryl Fielder*

Review Date: *Spring 2027*

Attendance Policy

This policy reflects the vision and aims of St. Michael's CE Primary School by:

- Encouraging staff, parents/carers and children to maximise the learning experience in order for every child to flourish in their potential as a child of God.
- Providing clear procedures for involving parents and carers in school attendance.

Principles

Consistent daily, punctual and full-time attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent, late or removed from school before the end of the school day.

We are passionate in our belief that lateness is unsettling for a child and disruptive for the class.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the absence is unavoidable. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is in school and therefore permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carer.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives them the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either 'Authorised' or 'Unauthorised'. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and/or for which no approved leave has been given. Unauthorised absence and persistent lateness is reported to the Local Authority's Attendance and Welfare Officer.

These include but are not limited to:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school late.
- Children who are frequently collected from school before the end of the school day.

The law was amended in September 2013 and schools are not permitted to approve any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The exceptional circumstances are not defined in law but the following may be considered:

- Religious observance
- Education off-site
- Attending interview (e.g. change of school, etc.)
- Medical or emergency dental appointment
- Approved sporting activity
- Weddings of immediate family - where the date set is not within the parents' control
- Funerals of immediate family

- Family holiday only where the parent/carer's employer has written to the school to explain that the holiday/leave cannot be taken at any other time of the year.

Every application for absence will be assessed individually. For attendance at a wedding or funeral consideration will be given to reasonable travelling time/arrangements to attend (depending on the location) in addition to the day of the event. The school does not expect to receive requests for attendance at family weddings or funerals that occur immediately before or after a school holiday period. The school may request to see documentary evidence to confirm/verify any requested absence. All requests for absence must be submitted a minimum of two weeks before the absence is required except in an emergency. If the absence is not authorised and the child is not in school on the days for which absence was requested the parent(s) may be liable to a fine (Fixed Penalty Notice) or prosecution.

Cases such as this will be referred to the issuing body, the Local Authority (LA), having first been assessed in consultation with the school's designated Education Welfare Officer (EWO.) Fixed Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under Section 444, Education Act 1996 or Section 36, the Children's Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate. The regulations regarding the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices (fines) in relation to unauthorised absences have also been amended by the 2013 legislation. Under the amended regulations the amount of the **Fixed Penalty Notice will be £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid within 28 days.**

Parents are requested to inform the school if the child has an infectious disease confirmed. Some diseases are notifiable and the school must report them to the Health Protection Agency. The school will also inform other parents so that they can check for similar symptoms. After a stomach upset (diarrhoea) or vomiting, children should be kept at home for 48 hours to avoid a recurrence at school and possibly infecting other children. If a child has head lice the school should be advised and the child treated but as treatment is normally applied in the evening, the child should not be absent from school.

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with staff (such as the Head, Inclusion Manager, Pupil Manager) in resolving any attendance problems together. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way the school may refer the child to the school's AWO (Lewisham's Attendance & Welfare Officer). The AWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Absence Reporting Procedure

- Parents/Carers need to make contact with the school office by 9.30am on the first day of the child's absence with a reason for absence. Contact can be made by telephone, email or via the ScholarPack Parents app.
- If the child has a medical appointment, the school must be provided with a copy of the appointment card/letter/text for school records.
- We consider absences to be authorised if the child is sick, however, absences for reasons such as birthdays, shopping trips or holidays will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Children who are unavoidably late must be taken to the office to give the reason for lateness, s/he will be registered with a late mark and will be marked in for a dinner.
- If no reason has been given for an absence, the school will make contact with the parent to establish the reason for the child's absence.
- The school produces a regular attendance report which identifies irregular attendance or persistent absence, lateness and holidays taken. These are shared with the AWO and the Attendance Team at the LA.
- Attendance is monitored to ensure that there are no safeguarding concerns. Particular attention is therefore given to the attendance of children who are considered to be vulnerable or potentially vulnerable or disadvantaged.

- If a child is absent for more than 10 days consecutively without authorisation, the absence will be referred to the Children Missing in Education Officer at the Local Authority. The child's name may be removed from the register and their place offered to another child.

Action Plan

The school follows an early intervention approach and will take the following, staged action to promote good attendance and minimise lateness. The use of staged intervention allows the school, where necessary, to make sound, evidence based referrals to the AWO and/or LA

- Telephone/text parents/carers if a child is not present in school by 9.00am (or as soon as possible after 9.00 am).
- Record and monitor reasons for lateness in the late attendance register and speak to parents if lateness is a persistent problem.
- Record and monitor details of children removed from school early or during the school day in conjunction with the stated reasons.
- Monitor the lateness, attendance and early leaving registers at regular intervals and take further action for children who persistently appear.
- Pay particular attention to the attendance or lateness of vulnerable children and disadvantaged children.
- Children who attend school for less than 90% are considered to be 'persistently absent'. The parent/carer will usually receive support from the school's attendance officer through telephone calls, Stage 1 letters and meetings *with a member of the school's senior management. These letters and meetings highlight the child's attendance level and request that parents improve their child's attendance.*
- Where attendance does not improve, the school may issue a Stage 2 letter, requesting medical evidence of the need for absence. An invitation to formally meet with Lewisham's AWO may be made to discuss and implement support strategies for improving the child's attendance.
- Children with absence below 90% who are considered to be vulnerable or potentially vulnerable or disadvantaged, the school will be mindful that the child/family may have a low level need requiring single or multi-agency support.
- Instances of poor attendance will be assessed, by the school, on a case by case basis and strategies and interventions may vary from those listed above.

Lateness

The school has an attendance cup which is given to the class with the best punctuality and attendance. This helps to reinforce to the children the importance of regular, punctual attendance at school. Punctuality allows children helps children to make the most of their learning; it allows them to start each day in a settled frame of mind and sets positive patterns for the future. The LA sets acceptable targets for attendance and the school is called to account by the LA if these are not met.

The school gates open at 8.45 am and close promptly at 8.55am, when all children should be in school. Children arriving after this time must enter school via the school office (juniors) or the main school doors (infants) where their arrival at school will be registered. Children arriving at school after 9.00am will receive an authorised late mark (L on the register). Those arriving after the registers have closed at 9.30am, will receive an unauthorised late mark (U on the register), which will show as an unauthorised absence on their attendance record. ***Parents should always accompany their child to the point of registration to explain the reason for their child's lateness.*** In cases of persistent lateness, the school will follow the Action Plan detailed in this policy, which may result in a referral to the school's AWO.

The people responsible for managing attendance and lateness at St. Michael's are:

Pupil Manager
Headteacher

Inclusion Manager