

# **St Mary Federation**

## **Attendance Policy**

**Reviewed .....**

**Signed .....**

**John Ward, Chair of Governors**

**Next Review Date: .....**

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## 1. Introduction/Aim

- 1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances.
- 1.2 At St Mary Federation we believe that regular school attendance enables children both to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and to become responsible, organised and motivated adults. We value all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

## 2. Legal Framework

- 2.1 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.
- 2.2 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- 2.3 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:
- Present;
  - Absent;
  - Present at approved educational activity; or
  - Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## 3. Definitions

- 3.1 For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

“Absence” as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

“Regular attendance” as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised

An “authorised absence” as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency or unavoidable cause

An “unauthorised absence” as:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

“Persistent absenteeism” (PA) as:

- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason

“Parent” as

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

#### 4. Categorising Absence and Attendance

4.1 The table below shows the national codes which enable all schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way, and comply with the regulations.

<b>Absence and Attendance Codes</b>	
<b>Present at School</b>	
/ \	Registration code / \ : present in school / = am \ =pm
L	Late arrival before the register has closed. Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.
<b>Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity</b>	
B	Off-site educational activity. This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore, by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home

	doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.
D	Dual Registered – at another educational establishment. This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the school Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question. Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.
J	At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment. This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity. This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.
V	Educational visit or trip. This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.
W	Work experience. Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.
<b>Absence codes when pupils are not present in school</b>	
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school. Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made. If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.
H	Holiday authorised by the school. Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments). Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.
M	Medical or dental appointments. Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
R	Religious observance. Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.
S	Study leave. Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be

	made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence. A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups. To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.
<b>Unauthorised Absence from School</b>	
G	Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher. If a school does not authorise 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 unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.
N	Reason for absence not yet provided. Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).
O	Absent from school without authorisation. If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.
U	Arrived in school after registration closed. Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.
<b>Administrative Codes</b>	
X	Not required to be in school. This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or</li> <li>• The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or</li> <li>• A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.</li> </ul> <p>This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).</li> </ul> <p>This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.</p>
Z	Pupil not on admission register. This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.
#	Planned whole or partial school closure. This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

## 4.2 Leave of Absence

4.2.1 Since September 2013, changes to Government regulations and guidance means that Head teachers can no longer authorise leave of absence for the sole

purpose of a holiday (unless in exceptional circumstances). All absences associated with a holiday (without exceptional circumstance) during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday may be referred to the Local Authority and be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution.

4.2.2 We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for child due to 'exceptional circumstances.' At St Mary Federation, leave of absence shall not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. This may only be granted at the discretion of the Head teacher. St Mary Federation will respond to all applications for leave of absence in writing.

4.2.3 Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must apply in writing using the appropriate form (see appendix 4) to the Head teacher at least a month before the planned leave. If a written request for leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, the leave will not be considered by the Head teacher and it will be marked as unauthorised. St Mary Federation will treat each application individually and discuss with you the circumstances of the application before a decision is made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may make a referral to the Local Authority to request that a penalty notice fine is issued or consider prosecution.

4.2.4 A penalty notice request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority should:-

- The parent fail to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Head teacher but is still taken.
- A longer period of time is taken in excess of the agreed number of days.

4.2.5 When absence is granted by the Head teacher, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

### 4.3 Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance

St Mary Federation acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil

absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

#### **4.4 Traveller Absence**

1. The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.
2. To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, s. 86 of The Education Act 1944 states that a Traveller parent shall be entitled to be acquitted if his or her child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) during the period of twelve months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted, if the family are of no fixed abode.
3. However, it should be noted that this provision applies only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.
4. When trading or otherwise conducting their business in or around Norfolk, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.
5. A specific St Mary Federation school will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when he or she is not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended that St Mary Federation school in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school; in such cases, the pupil's school place at the St Mary Federation school will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.
6. A St Mary Federation school can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:
  - Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen; and
  - Inform the school regarding proposed return dates
7. Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:
  - The child is on roll and attending another visited school
  - Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
8. Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil

#### **4.5 Unauthorised Absence**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school. That decision is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Arrangements or appointments for cutting the pupil's hair
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- An unwillingness to attend school, or inability to attend owing to inadequate personal/family organisation
- A refusal to attend school on health grounds but where the pupil is actually considered well enough to attend
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the school

#### **4.6 Persistent Absence**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

The attendance of all pupils at our school is monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice or full prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3 month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

#### **4.7 Late Arrival at School**

At all St Mary Federation schools all pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year.

Registration times for Federation schools are as follows:

**Brancaster – 9:00am to 9:10am and 1:00pm.**

**Docking – 8:55 to 9:05am and 1:00pm**

**Sedgford – 8:55am to 9:05am and 1:00pm**

All pupils arriving after the start of the school day but before registers are closed will be recorded as late – L code (Late before the close of register). All pupils arriving after the close of registers will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session - U code (Late after the close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the session. Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in

appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

Please note: L or U codes will be used if a pupil arrives after the close of the afternoon register for the PM session.

## 5. Deletions from the Register

5.1 In accordance with the Regulations, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

A	Where the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a school attendance order, that another school is substituted by the local authority for that named in the order or the order is revoked by the local authority on the ground that arrangements have been made for the child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude otherwise than at school.
B	<b>Change of school</b> Except where it has been agreed by the proprietor that the pupil should be registered at more than one school, in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) or regulation 9, that he has been registered as a pupil at another school.
C	Where a pupil is registered at more than one school, and in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (j) or (m) or regulation 9, that he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor of any other school at which he is registered has given consent to the deletion.
D	<b>Home education</b> In a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph, that he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor has received written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school.
E	<b>Moved away</b> Except in the case of a boarder that he has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which he is registered.
F	In the case of a pupil granted leave of absence in accordance with regulation 7(1A), that — (i) the pupil has failed to attend the school within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted; (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and (iii) the proprietor and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is
G	That he is certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he nor his parent has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
H	That he has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and (i) at no time was his absence during that period authorised by the proprietor in accordance with regulation 6(2); (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and (iii) The proprietor of the school and the Local Authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is.
I	That he is detained in pursuance of a final order made by a court or of an order of recall made by a court or the Secretary of State, that order being for a period of not less than four months, and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will return to the school at the end of that period.
J	That the pupil has died.
K	That the pupil will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets and— (i) the relevant person has indicated that the pupil will cease to attend the school; or (ii) The pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements for admission to the school's sixth form

L	In the case of a pupil at a school other than a maintained school, an Academy, a city technology college or a city college for the technology of the arts, that he has ceased to be a pupil of the school.
M	<b>Permanent exclusion.</b> That he has been permanently excluded from the school.
N	Where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, which he has not on completing such education transferred to a reception, or higher, class at the school.
O	Where— (i) the pupil is a boarder at a maintained school or an Academy; (ii) charges for board and lodging are payable by the parent of the pupil; and (iii) Those charges remain unpaid by the pupil's parent at the end of the school term to which they relate

St Mary Federation schools will follow Norfolk County Council's Children Missing Education procedures when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown and the school will carry out joint enquiries with Norfolk County Council to establish the whereabouts of the child.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

At St Mary Federation, we believe that improved school attendance is a responsibility shared by governors, school staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governors of St Mary Federation will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governors' meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Senior Management Team at St Mary Federation will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governors and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated
- Set out how Pupil Premium will be used to support pupils with irregular attendance

All staff at St Mary Federation schools will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Regulations and other relevant legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents, and the school timetable
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class
- Bring a note of explanation from their parents or parents to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen
- Follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

The member of staff responsible for attendance will work to further develop relationships with families to bring about improved attendance. This may involve seeking multi-agency support. The member of staff responsible for attendance will support good attendance, respond to concerns and promote improvement in attendance by:

- Monitoring and analysing pupil attendance data
- Undertaking regular attendance meetings with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and other relevant staff members
- Implementing the identified strategies for promoting good whole school attendance
- Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance
- Managing individual pupil casework files
- Coordinating Individual Action Plans for pupils causing concern including the instigation of a Family Support Plan (FSP) and/ or the implementation of a parenting contract
- Ensuring first day calling procedures are adhered to, if a child is absent from school without contact from parents
- Taking an active lead in delivering whole school initiatives such as awards assemblies and reward schemes
- Making referrals to appropriate external agencies

St Mary Federation requests that parents will:

- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return, following this with a note wherever possible
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours

- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their school work or home and family life
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues

## **7. Attendance Protocols**

If a child is absent, the following will be initiated by the school:

- The first day calling procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register at 9:30am and where no reason for absence is known
- If there is still no contact made from the pupil's parents, a further telephone call home will be made again that morning. If no response can be gained, the child's named emergency contact will be telephoned
- If school cannot make contact with a parent and are concerned about a pupil, a home visit may be carried out
- School will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission

In certain circumstances a school of the Federation may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil or request a welfare check to be made by the police
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement
- Refer to an external agency/ support service to offer support, guidance and advice
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or referring to Children Services, where there are safeguarding concerns

### **7.1 Expected absence procedure for parents:**

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to:

- Contact school by telephone call on the first day of absence and each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return
- If no contact is received, the Attendance protocols will be instigated

## 7.2 Support Systems

School recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Parent Support advisor
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- 1 to 1 mentoring
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages
- Attendance panels
- Parenting contracts
- Engaging the support of other agencies

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, the Head teacher will consider the use of legal sanctions following consultation with the Local Authority.

## 7.3 Attendance Procedure and Reward System

Attendance figures are monitored on a regular basis by the senior leadership team. Pupils who have 100% attendance for a whole term receive a certificate in recognition of this. When a child's attendance drops below 95%, the reasons for this are investigated and the child's attendance is monitored closely. Apart from in exceptional circumstances, a warning letter is sent to parents reminding them of the importance of pupils' attending schools and the damaging effects of them not doing so. If a child's attendance drops below 90% (apart from in exceptional circumstances), a second letter is sent to parents, requesting evidence for any

further absences which may include a doctor's appointment card or a prescription. Without the appropriate evidence, the letter states that the absence will be unauthorised (see appendix for warning letters).

## **8. Related Policies**

To underpin the values and ethos of our school and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential the following policies are integral to this approach:

- safeguarding including child protection
- admissions
- anti-bullying
- special educational needs
- teaching and learning
- behaviour

## **9. Statutory Framework**

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- School attendance, DFE (2016)
- School attendance parental responsibility measures: statutory guidance, DFE (revised March 2017)
- Norfolk County Council Children Missing Education Practice & Procedures
- 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', DFE (2016)

## **10. Policy review and consultation**

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office. We also inform parents about this policy when their children join our school and through our school newsletter. We recognise the expertise our staff build by managing school attendance on a daily basis and we therefore invite staff to contribute to and shape this policy and associated safeguarding arrangements. This policy is reviewed on an annual basis.

## **11. Appendices**

10.1 The following pages contain appendices relevant to this policy.

## Appendix 1: Warning letter FPN

Date

Dear Parent/Carer,

Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. At ... School our aim is to work with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This letter is to remind to all parents/carers regarding the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government remains very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must to continue take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention where they have:

1. 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence where some or all of the absence may be attributed to an unauthorised holiday in term-time (for absences from 1st September 2017); or
2. 15% unauthorised absence over a period of 6 school weeks for reasons other than unauthorised term time holiday.

Any pupil at ...School who meets either of the criteria, will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued it is a fine of £60 per parent per child which must be paid in one payment in 21 days. If a Notice is unpaid within the 21 days, the fine will double to £120 per parent per child if paid within 28 days. If a fixed penalty notice fine is not paid in full within the timescale set out above, the Local Authority is required to start legal proceedings against the parent(s) in the local Magistrates court for the offence of failing to ensure their child has attended school regularly.

I hope we can count on your support in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Miss J Bland  
Acting Executive Headteacher

### Appendix 3: Attendance concern form (below 95%)

Date

Dear.....

We notice that .....attendance last academic year was .....%. The school's attendance target is 96%. Regular school attendance is an important part of giving your child the best possible start in life and children who miss school often can easily fall behind with their work, feel less confident and less comfortable about coming to school. This can also lead to poorer results in exams. We would like to draw your attention to these interesting statistics regarding attendance:

- If your child has 90% attendance over the whole 11 years at school, they will miss more than an entire year of education.
- 91.1% attendance = missing 17 days of school in one year.
- 82.1% attendance = missing 34 days of school in one year.

Missing 17 days a year means dropping 1 GCSE grade (on average).

#### ***Preventing your child from missing school: what you can do***

- make sure they understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- take an interest in their education - ask about school work and encourage them to get involved in school activities
- discuss any problems they may have at school and let us know about anything you are concerned about
- don't let them take time off school for minor ailments - particularly those which would not prevent you from going to work
- Arrange appointments and outings after school hours, at weekends or during school holidays
- Under normal circumstances the school will not to agree to your child going on holiday during term time

As always, the school are here to support you. If there is anything we can do to help please pop in.

Yours sincerely,

Miss J Bland  
Acting Executive Headteacher

#### Appendix 4: Attendance concern form (below 90%)

Date

Dear .....

I am writing to express my concern at ..... poor attendance so far this academic year which currently stands at ..... The school's target for attendance is 96%. Regular school attendance is an important part of giving your child the best possible start in life and children who miss school often can easily fall behind with their work, feel less confident and less comfortable about coming to school. This can also lead to poorer results in exams.

As .....’s parent you are legally responsible for making sure he comes to school regularly and, as a last resort, schools and the Education Authority have legal powers to deal with poor attendance.

***Preventing your child from missing school: what you can do***

- make sure they understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- take an interest in their education - ask about school work and encourage them to get involved in school activities
- discuss any problems they may have at school and let us know about anything you are concerned about
- don't let them take time off school for minor ailments - particularly those which would not prevent you from going to work
- Arrange appointments and outings after school hours, at weekends or during school holidays
- Under normal circumstances the school will not to agree to your child going on holiday during term time

It is very important that ..... attendance improves; therefore we will no longer authorise any absence that is not supported by evidence (for example an appointment card or prescription) on each occasion they are absent.

The school is setting a target of at least....for the next 6 school weeks to avoid referral to Children's services.

Yours sincerely,

Miss J Bland  
Acting Executive Headteacher

### Appendix 5: Pupil Absence request form

Name of School:

**EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR PUPIL ABSENCE FROM EDUCATION**

**Please note: taking your child out of school during term time is detrimental to your child's educational progress and is strictly illegal**

Your child's full name:	
Year group/class:	
Name of parent/carer making this application:	
Dates of leave requested: <i>Please include all part-days and full days, e.g. noon 12/3/17 – 14/3/17, returning to school on 15/3/17</i>	
Please outline the exceptional circumstances for your child and/or yourself which have led to this application for absence.  Please explain why it is impossible to avoid this absence for your child at this time, including the reasons why there are no alternative suitable times outside of school hours or within any of the school vacations.  <i>Continue on a separate page if required</i>	

Exceptional reason accepted **Yes / No** (Headteacher)

This absence **has been authorised / has not been authorised.**

Signature of Headteacher..... Date Parent/Carer informed.....

Headteacher Comments:

I/we have read the information on the reverse of this application and would like to formally request the absence as shown.

Signature of parent(s) / carer(s):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Office use only:

Is this absence more than 5 days

Current Attendance: \_\_\_\_\_ Prior leave: \_\_\_\_\_ Authorised / Not Authorised/ Further Information Required

## Absences during Term Time

You are required under the Education Act (2006) to ensure your child attends school regularly. Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#). These amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The St Mary Federation will not authorise absences if they believe it is to the detriment of children's education or if the absences are during school exam periods and SATs.

Before completing this application we would advise that you consider very seriously how the absences will affect your child's education. Schools are not obliged to provide work for children taking leave of absence, however some may choose to do this.

The government states that any excessive absence or any refusal of leave of absence must be recorded as unauthorised on the child's records. You need to be aware an accumulation of unauthorised absences will result in Penalty Notices or legal proceedings against you.

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention where they have: 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence where some or all of the absence may be attributed to an unauthorised holiday in term time (for absences from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017); or 15% unauthorised absence over a period of 6 weeks for reasons other than unauthorised term time holiday. The intervention could be in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

### Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances

There must be a very strong case for why it would be impossible or unfeasible for the pupil to miss an occasion or event, or in the case of holiday, why it is impossible for the parent(s) to take holiday in any of the available school vacations. **Unfortunately, requesting absence for a holiday in term time because the costs are too high in the summer break is not an exceptional circumstance - other vacation periods are available.**

### Fixed Penalty Notices

Fixed Penalty notices are fines of £60 to £120 imposed on parents per pupil. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. They can only be issued by the Headteacher or someone authorised by and through the local authority officer or the police. All schools in Norfolk must send penalty notices to be issued to the local authority and the police must send copies of penalties to the local authority.

### Penalty notices are issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

Penalties can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school. Penalties may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

**Discuss with the school any request for leave of absence prior to making any bookings. Our school's designated person is the Headteacher. It is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure you received confirmation from the school before the trip is taken. Do not assume permission is granted if you have not received written confirmation.**

The school seeks to respond to applications within five working days, though this is not always possible. Please remember that we must have sufficient advanced notice to consider applications. All absences taken without prior authorisation cannot be authorised after the event. Should you not wish to accept the decision, you may appeal to the governors in writing care of The Clerk to the Governors. You should do this within 10 days of receipt of the school's decision.

