

Attendance Policy

Date	Review Date	Coordinator	Nominated Governor
November 2023	November 2024	Judith Arkwright	Alex Lambert

Rationale

Regular school attendance is important so that children and young people can make the most of the educational opportunities that are provided at St Michael's School. It also helps children to become emotionally resilient, confident adults who are able to achieve their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. School is the foundation for preparing children and young people for life as adults.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome underpinned by our school's core values of Respect, Honesty and Love, enabling every member of the school community to have a 'Lifetime Love for Learning'.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually. Parents and the school community share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

This policy represents our commitment to support pupils to achieve 100% attendance. It sets out the strategies to improve attendance along with the rewards and benefits of good attendance. The sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

"Better attendance at school by pupils improves their educational achievements and, in turn, their lives and prospects. Even a small reduction in absence would result in many pupils receiving greater benefit from their education." The National Audit Office.

Aims of the Attendance Policy

We believe that good attendance is based on a strong partnership between school, parents and the child. This includes clear communication with parents and pupils regarding our expectations of what is required to secure excellent attendance for pupils at our school.

At St Michael's School, we will work with you and your child to help them to be in school all day, every day, whenever possible. We will work with you to address lateness, irregular or poor attendance to ensure full-time attendance.

At St Michael's School, we expect:

- Pupils to arrive at school every day on time (by 8:45am)
- Parents to work with the school to ensure that their child attends regularly

Attendance: The Legal Framework – roles and responsibilities

The law says that ensuring a child receives education is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). For most parents this means registering their child at a school. Allowing children to stay at home from school, when this has not been authorised by the school, is an offence in law. As a result, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice or referred to the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service for prosecution in the magistrates' court.

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By law, schools are required:

- To take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon.
- To report to the Local Authority pupils who fail to attend regularly (persistent absence)
- To report to the Local Authority children who are absent for ten consecutive school days or more without known reason (missing in education)
- The attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- Authorised absences are those that have been agreed by the Headteacher.
- Unauthorised absences are those where no valid reason has been provided for absence or those absences which the Headteacher has not agreed.

Partnership Working – roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. The link governor is responsible for monitoring attendance and processes when attendance falls below 95%.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Supporting parents to ensure full attendance
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

The school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Meets with the link governor to monitor attendance.

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

Admin staff are expected to take calls from parents, and monitor messages on Weduc, about absence and record it on the school system.

Do you know these facts about absence and attendance?

Research suggests that a pupil who misses 17 days of school a year will drop 1 GCSE grade in attainment. (DfE)

Attendance rate	How many days of education missed in a year	How many weeks of education missed in a year
95%	equates to half a day off every two weeks in a school year	2 weeks missed over a school year
90%	equates to a day off every two weeks in a school year	4 weeks missed over a school year
85%	equates to one and a half days off every two weeks in a school year	6 weeks missed over a school year
80%	equates to one whole day off every week in a school year	8 weeks missed over a school year

Procedures

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Legally the school register must be taken twice a day. At St Michael's school the register is taken at 8:45am and 1pm. Pupils arriving after 8:45am will be marked as late. Pupils arriving after 9:15am will be marked as unauthorised absence for the morning session.

Absence is recorded as unauthorised until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

We will contact parents to address and improve attendance where:

- A pupil's attendance falls below 95%
- A pupil has more than 3 weeks where they haven't achieved full attendance in a term (In Wiltshire there are 6 terms in an academic year)
- A pupil has more than 4 recorded lates in a term
- A pupil has a regular pattern of absence

Parents are asked to:

- Notify the school via Weduc when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first and subsequent days of absence. Parents should make contact with school before the start of the school day
- Keep the school informed, in cases of ongoing absence. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always remain with the school
- Tell the school if their child is going to be late, the reason why and expected time of arrival
- Only request leave of absence/holiday in term time if it is for an exceptional circumstance

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Head Teacher
- Arriving at school after 9:15am (without a valid and authorised reason)
- Death of a pet

We will contact the parent/carer if a child is absent and the parent/carer has not advised that the child will not be in school. If we cannot speak directly with parents/carers then we will make contact with nominated emergency contacts to establish the reason for absence; this is in line with school safeguarding procedures.

If after 3 days of absence, your child has not been seen and no contact has been made with the school, the school need to make a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

After 10 days of unexplained absence and no contact with the school, we are obliged to notify the local authority. The local authority will follow their procedures for Children Missing from Education (CME) and parents may expect contact and visits from an Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the well-being and safety of your child.

Monitoring attendance

Weekly monitoring of the registers will be made by the Attendance Manager to identify pupils whose attendance falls below 95% or who have more than four late marks in a term.

- We will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, working together to understand the causes of absence and how we, as a school, can help.
- If attendance does not improve we are required by the Local Authority to hold a formal School Attendance Meeting.

- This is followed up by a formal review and if concerns remain we are required to make a referral to the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service. This may result in the below actions, with further details on the [Wiltshire Council website](#):
 - **The parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice, which carries a fine of £120, per parent, per child. This is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of issue. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.**
 - **The local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, imposition of orders such as Parenting Orders or even imprisonment.**
 - **In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.**

Strategies for improving and maintaining good attendance

We are a caring school community where the needs of all pupils are carefully considered. St Michael's school provides and promotes a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that pupils feel safe, and know that their presence is valued.

If there are specific issues which might impact on your child's attendance it is important that you talk to us so that we can support you and your child.

There may be times when we ask other agencies to become involved to help us understand and work with you to encourage regular school attendance (eg Wiltshire Council, school health, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Advisory Service, Medical Needs Reintegration Service). If we feel that this would be helpful, we will discuss this with you first.

We are very keen to listen to the views of children and parents with regard to attendance matters and we welcome any feedback which helps us to shape how we work with families to address attendance issues and reward excellent attendance.

Persistent Absence

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year (this equates to one day per fortnight of learning missed), for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a pupil by creating gaps in his or her learning.

Requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

In accordance with Department for Education guidance, leave of absence from school including for holidays in term-time, may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Parents are required to complete a leave of absence request form which must outline the exceptional circumstances for which the leave has been requested. Leave of absence request forms must be completed in advance of the dates requested. We require prior notice unless the absence is related to an emergency. We do not give retrospective agreement for leave of absence so any absence not advised to the school in advance will be unauthorised.

Requests will be considered by the Headteacher and parents and carers will be advised if their request is agreed. Any pupil who has taken a term time holiday will be required to provide medical evidence if they are ill in the period directly before or after the dates advised to school. Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence if a pupil does not return to school on the agreed date following a holiday as a result of delayed or cancelled flights or other travel arrangements.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The attendance policy will be reviewed annually by governors and school staff to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the school community. We will ensure that the policy reflects current DfE and Local Authority guidance so that parents may be assured of the standards that we strive to achieve.

Communicating the contents of the Attendance Policy

All new parents are introduced to the policy and information on attendance in the school prospectus. It is also accessible on the school website.

Our policy is available in other languages if required.