St. Mary's Church of England Primary School Fownhope

ATTENDANCE POLICY

"Walking together in the fruit of the Spirit"

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2026

A rich education is more than simply learning reading, writing and maths. It is about helping a child grow into their full potential as inquisitive, well balanced and cheerful adults. As a Church school we nurture children to display the 'fruit of the Spirit', which is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). At St Mary's you will find children growing in mind, body and spirit as they form good relationships with each other, the staff and discover a faith which will sustain them in a rapidly changing world.

1. Philosophy

What is good attendance?

Good attendance is 'children attending school for every session of every day the school is open to them'.

1.1 At St. Mary's Primary School we seek to promote a culture in which children enjoy coming to school, and do not want to miss out. We are committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embrace the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

1.2 The whole school community (pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors) have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

1.3 The policy has been drawn up based on current government and local authority guidance and statutory regulations. It meets the requirements of the Department for Education document 'working together to improve school attendance' which can be read at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

2. Objectives

- to encourage full attendance and punctuality
- to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies
- to minimise the occurrence of poor attendance and absenteeism
- to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing body

The governing body is responsible for:

- promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- making sure that school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- making sure that staff receive adequate training on attendance
- holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The curriculum and ethos committee is responsible for monitoring attendance.

3.2 The headteacher

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
- monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- leading attendance across the school
- offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- having an oversight of data analysis devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Headteacher and can be contacted on 01432 860474 or at admin@stmarys.hereford.sch.uk

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- monitoring and analysing attendance data
- benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance
- working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- advising the headteacher to issue fixed-penalty notices and gaining their authorisation

The attendance officer is Mrs Slane and can be contacted on 01432 860474 or at admin@stmarys.hereford.sch.uk

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9:00am and 1:30pm each school day

3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- take calls/ emails from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- transfer absence information from parents/carers to the class teacher/ headteacher in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- contact parents/carers via text/ email if no communication is received regarding their child's absence by 9.15 am.
- contact parents/carers via telephone if no communication is received regarding their child's absence by 9.30 am.
- record any concerns regarding a child's attendance/ absence

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- ensure that their child attends school every day on time
- call or email the school to report their child's absence before 8.30am on the first day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, advising when the child is expected to return
- provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- attend school every day on time
- arrive in the classroom punctually after breaks and assemblies

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register (electronically using SIMS) and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the beginning of the morning session (8:45 am) and the beginning of the afternoon session (1:15 pm). It will mark whether every pupil is:

- present
- attending an approved off-site educational activity

- absent
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- the original entry
- the amended entry
- the reason for the amendment
- the date on which the amendment was made
- the name and position of the person who made the amendment

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- # = planned whole or partial school closure
- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school for exceptional circumstances
- S = Study leave
- C1 = Leave of absence for participating in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- C2 = Leave of absence for part-time pupils
- E = Suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision made
- J1 = Leave of absence for job or education interviews
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- K = Attending provision arranged by the LA
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Traveller absence

- Q = Absent due to a lack of access arrangements or due to the pupil having to attend a school that does not qualify for travel arrangements and is more than walking distance from where they live.
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity, with supervision being physically provided by an appropriately trained and knowledgeable person
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- W = Attending work experience
- Y1 = Absent due to their regular transport not being available
- Y2 = Absent due to travel disruption
- Y3 = Absent due to part of the school premises being closed
- Y4 = Absent due to the school site being closed
- Y5 = Absent due to being in criminal justice detention
- Y6 = Absent due to public health guidance or law, despite the pupil being well enough to attend
- Y7 = Absent due to any other unavoidable cause, the nature of which must be documented by the school.
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

Pupils who are absent from school but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register.

We will also record:

- whether the absence is authorised or not
- the nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- the nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken between 8:45am and 9:00am and will be kept open until 9:15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:15pm.

In the event of computer failure, paper registers will be kept.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school on 01432 860474 and selecting option 1. We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

If parents/carers wish to request a leave of absence for such an appointment, they must inform the school office, ideally in writing, in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Section 5 details term-time absences which may be authorised.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Parents/ carers of children who are late will be asked to complete the 'late book' located in the school entrance foyer, stating the number of minutes late and the reason for the lateness. Half-termly this book will be checked and the parent of any child who has been late on more than five occasions will receive a letter from the headteacher. Cases of persistent lateness will be referred to the attendance officer who will liaise with the headteacher and instigate a follow-up meeting or conversation with parents/ carers. It will be re-iterated that all minutes of lateness add up to many minutes/ hours of lost learning.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency

contacts, the school may complete a home visit to check on the welfare of the pupil. If no answer, the school may contact the local authorities, including the police.

- identify whether the absence is approved or not
- identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels at parents' evenings and end-of-year reports. Whole school and class attendance is shared weekly via the school website.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted using the 'exceptional leave of absence form' (appendix 1), which can be collected at the school office, as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

New Government regulations regarding penalty notices came into effect on 19th August 2024.

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period

  Penalty notice fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period. These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g.6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).

- Per parent, per child

  Penalty notice fines will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for unauthorised absences, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

- First offence

  The first time a penalty notice is issued the amount will be:

  £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days.

- Second offence (within 3 years)

  The second time a penalty notice is issued the amount will be:

  £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. There will be no offer of a reduction in rate.

- Third offence and any other further offences (within 3 years)

  The third time an offence is committed for unauthorised absences a penalty notice will not be issued. The local authority will instead consider other legal options to improve attendance and this could include prosecution. If prosecution in the Magistrates Court is deemed appropriate, fines can reach up to £2500.

- New two penalty notice limit in a three-year period

  The three-year rolling period starts for parents when the first penalty notice is issued to them after the 19th August 2024.

Penalty notices can be issued by the local authority officer or the police. For full details, see https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/26980/penalty-notice-local-code-of-conduct-2024

Legal Measures for Tackling Poor Attendance

Referrals to Herefordshire Council
In education law, parents/carers commit an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school where the child is registered unless the school has authorised the absence.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness
We will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is an unauthorised absence and:

1. the child or family do not require support from any agency to improve attendance
2. the child or family has failed to engage with help and support, and parents are complicit in the child's absence

The following legal measures may be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school and Herefordshire Council makes the decisions in accordance with their code of conduct:

- Attendance plans
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

The decision on whether to refer to Herefordshire Council ultimately rests with the Headteacher. This may take into account:
- a number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- Irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

6. Attendance monitoring

6.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level

- identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing body.

6.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- promote good attendance as a whole school, explaining its benefits to children and parents
- provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- publish weekly summary attendance data for each class on the school's website

6.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- work with external services if required, to support that child and family, e.g. SEND team, medical practitioners etc.

Other procedures for targeting unauthorised absence will include:

- meetings
- letters
- closely monitored absence with evidence required.

In line with the school's guidelines this policy will be reviewed annually.

This policy was approved by the Governing Body on:	22nd September 2026
Signature of Headteacher:	
Signature of Chair of Governors:	A. Gunn
Review Date:	September 2027

APPENDIX 1 – EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST

Headteachers may grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances' only. If you take your child out of school and the absence is not agreed by the headteacher, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence. The school will then notify Herefordshire Council and you may face a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or other legal action.

Child's Name:	**Date of Birth:**	**Class:**
Date From/ To:	**Destination:**	**Total Days:**

Parent/ carer details:

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss)		
Surname		
Forename		
Date of Birth		
Relationship to pupil		
Address		
Telephone number:		
email address:		
Pupil resides with:		

Please detail below your EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES for this request:

Signature: Date:

Signature: Date: