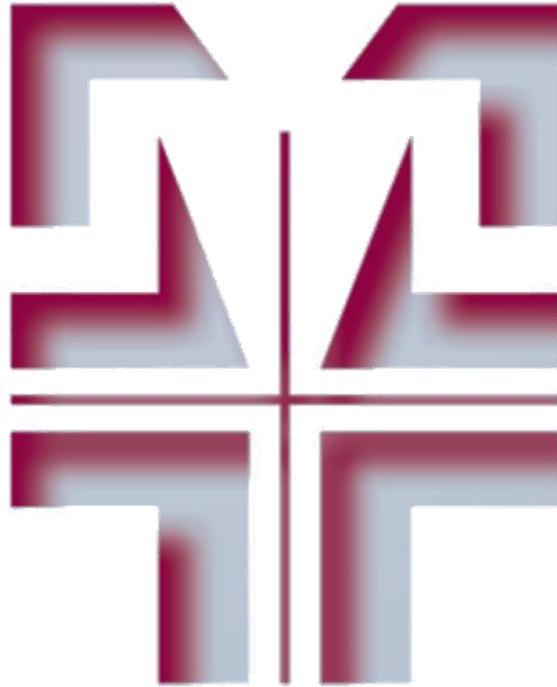


Saint Michael's CE High School

A Church of England Academy



Therefore, choose

Whole School Attendance Policy

July 2018

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF OUR CHRISTIAN VISION

Our motto is **'Therefore choose [life]'** from Deuteronomy.



We understand this to mean growing in **body, mind and spirit**, so that all who learn and work here may flourish, experiencing the joy and hope of **'Life in all its fullness'**.

This is further explained in our Mission Statement,

*'As a vibrant learning community
we choose to serve God,
pursue excellence
and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual.'*

St Michael's Church of England High School will encourage good attendance for all pupils by offering an environment in which pupils feel happy, safe and valued as part of 'Team St Michael's'. Excellent attendance underpins our aim that all pupils should be given opportunities to grow in body mind and spirit to 'be the best they can be'. For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Why regular attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of the parent/carer and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting regular attendance

We at St Michael's see that everyone has a part to play in helping to create a pattern of regular attendance. This includes pupils, parents/carers and all members of school staff. Currently our average attendance figure stands at an impressive 97.2%. We are very proud of our pupils' excellent attendance record and emphasises the enjoyment many of our young people experience here at St Michael's. To help us in our push for regular attendance we will:

- Create a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter.
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.

- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Carry out transition work with pupils moving on to St Michael's.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school including parents/carers, pupils, staff and governors.
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.
- Work in conjunction with parents/carers and members of the wellbeing team to improve attendance when concerns are identified.
- Undertake home visits and create action plans when concerns are identified.

Understanding types of absence

St Michael's Church of England High School is required to classify every half-day absence from school as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why the information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons like illness, emergencies, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive 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 authorised by the headteacher.
- Days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. If there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a medical appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance drops below 90% across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan. These plans are designed to help and support the child and parents/carers in improving their attendance/punctuality figures. The plan may include support through the use of a mentor, individual incentive programmes, parenting contracts and

participation in activities around raising attendance. The plan may also include potential consequences of any targets not being met.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone or you can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Attendance Lead, Pupil Manager and/or Headteacher if absences persist.

At St Michael's we monitor attendance very closely and, where appropriate, have specific procedures if your child's attendance drops below certain figures.

- Below 95% - Your child's education is beginning to suffer and you will receive a letter home informing you of the situation with a copy of your child's attendance record. We are at this stage requesting parental support to help improve the attendance of the child.
- Below 92% - Your child's education is suffering even further and they are close to being classed as 'persistently absent'. Parents/carers will be invited in to school to meet with a member of the wellbeing team. This meeting will be used to discuss how we can support parents/carers and the child. It may be that an attendance support plan is drawn up to highlight reasons behind any absences and offer strategies to help support both the parents/carers and the child. Other services may well be involved at this stage. Medical evidence must now be provided for any absences that your child has due to illness or medical appointments. Without this evidence, future absences will be marked on the register as unauthorised.
- Below 90% - Your child's attendance is now a very serious concern. They are now classed as 'persistently absent' and are in the lowest 5% of attenders in the school. Parents/carers must attend a meeting in school with their pupil manager in order to complete a parenting contract that will highlight our concerns and provide further strategies of support. If parents/carers fail to engage with this or the child's attendance does not improve then school will use legal intervention. (See section later in the policy).

If at any point we do become concerned about your child's attendance we may carry out a home visit to see where we can support both parents/carers and the child.

Contact Details

There are many instances when we need to contact parents/carers, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date phone numbers for each parent/carer.

Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage to work with us in resolving any problems. When this is the case most issues have a successful outcome. If further action is required then school may consider using some of the following strategies to help support parents/carers in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. These might include:

- Meetings in school between parents/carers, pupils and pastoral staff.

- Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and referral to outside agencies.
- Attendance Panel Meetings.
- Penalty Notices.

Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their tutor getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8.50am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.15am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. Likewise the afternoon session starts at 1.55pm, registers are completed by 2.00pm and closed by 2.10pm. A child arriving after 2pm will be recorded as late.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the child's Pupil Manager and/or a member of the wellbeing team to help try to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave in Term Time:

The Headteacher will not, by law, be able to grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "very exceptional circumstances". Regardless of the circumstances, no leave of absence will be authorised if a pupil's attendance is below 93% or they are in Year 10 or 11. "Very exceptional circumstances" might include such circumstances as the funeral or wedding of a close relative or representing school at county or national level. Taking pupils out of school for the purpose of holidays will not be authorised. Parents may, of course, choose to take their children out of school without permission but we have been instructed that the repercussions of any unauthorised absence should include the potential issuing of fines under a penalty notice.

It is worth noting here that any financial savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

In considering any request for leave in term time we will look at various factors such as:

- The timing of the request;
When a pupil is just starting school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period. Your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible. Avoid absences, if possible, both immediately before and during any examination period.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any levels of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below the average of 97% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave.
- Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. In certain circumstances, parents risk

losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date. Readmission cannot be guaranteed. The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010 and 2013)

Religious Absence

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

Attendance - Roles and Responsibilities

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually.
- Contact school on 1st day of absence.
- Avoid any leave in term time and apply in advance using the appropriate form when there are very exceptional circumstances.
- Attend any arranged meetings in school.
- Participation, where necessary, in Action Plans, Common Assessment Framework (CAFs) and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school that may help attendance/punctuality.
- Attend school punctually.
- Speak to parents/carers and a teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance or punctuality.
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

School Wellbeing Team:

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance and punctuality has a high profile within the school.
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters.
- Ensure adequate time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities.
- Take responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision
- Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided.
- Input and update the attendance registers
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups.
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents.
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance.

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment.
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum.
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns.
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance.
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff.
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures.

Governors

- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly

- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which absence requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

Use of legal intervention:

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

In law, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a student's attendance at the school at which they are registered without justification. Legal sanctions are available under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, Section 36 of the Children's Act 1989 or Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour act 2003, to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

In circumstances where there is chronic poor attendance the school may request a prosecution through Section 444 (1) of the 1996 Education Act. This will result in prosecution through the courts if there is no improvement in attendance.

For students whose pattern of attendance is not regular the school may also request a Penalty Notice to be served by the local authority under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour act 2003. This is a fine of £120 per parent. Penalty notices can be requested when:

- There is a pattern of regular lateness to school.
- Regular unauthorised absence from school.
- An unauthorised holiday or leave is taken.

Young people are sometimes, for various reasons, reluctant to attend school. Any difficulties or problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between school, the pupil and the parent or carer. If a pupil is reluctant to attend parents and carers must contact the child's Tutor or Pupil Manager in the first instance. Parents should not condone this absence or try and 'cover it up' as this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and makes the situation worse.

Aims

We will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Strategies will include attendance certificates – Gold 100% attendance, Silver 98-99% attendance and Bronze for 97% attendance. These will be awarded in assemblies and will form part of the rewards system. There will be an attendance display and inter tutorial competitions to encourage attendance. Attendance will always be an agenda item at Pupil Managers meetings.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school, including pupils, parents, teachers and governors. Strategies may include first day calls from the Attendance Officer for persistent absentees, weekly updates regarding lates and attendance will be sent to Tutors, Pupil Managers and members of the wellbeing team as appropriate. Early ECM interviews with tutors, instigated by the AIW, will take place when attendance begins to give cause for concern.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school. Strategies will include first day calls, telephone calls to parents and arrange meetings with parents. Letters will be sent out as soon as attendance starts to give cause for concern (acknowledging awareness of particular circumstances). Attendance Plans, and in cases causing grave concern, further letters outlining the actions which will take place if attendance does not improve, including the use of fixed penalty notices.

- Recognise and respond to the needs of individual pupils when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence. Specific attention will be given to ensure pupils from vulnerable groups are given the support they need.
- Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole school attendance levels, including statutory targets through the systematic approach to analysing attendance related data.
- The Attendance Officer will act on instructions to undertake:
 - first day absence calls for identified pupils;
 - a letter, if no contact on behalf of an individual pupil has been made;
 - monitor individual pupils' who's attendance is giving cause for concern;
 - produce individual pupils' attendance records as required;
 - feedback to Tutors, Pupil Managers and the wellbeing team.

Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

In the event of an unavoidable absence parents or carers should telephone school as soon as possible. They should give the reason for the absence and an estimate return date to school.

When the pupil returns to school a written note should confirm the reason and dates of the absence. The Tutor will record this on the pupil's attendance record and record appropriately.

When a problem does occur (Use of Penalty Notices)

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and work with the Attendance Officer, Tutor, and Pupil Manager in resolving any attendance problems. This is nearly always successful.

If pupils are removed from school without permission the school will request the Local Authority to issue penalty notices in respect of unauthorised absence, in line with The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. The threshold for a Penalty notice to be requested is unauthorised leave to reach 5days (10 sessions) in a term or 7 days (14 sessions) over 2 consecutive terms.

Policy Reviewed
J F Chadwick
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