

Original Date Written	Latest Date Reviewed	Date for Review
September 2016	October 2026	October 2027

Marlborough St Mary's CE Primary School



MARLBOROUGH
ST MARY'S
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Together we believe, learn and achieve

Marlborough Mary's CE VC Primary School

Attendance Policy

Our Vision is of an inclusive, happy and successful school at the heart of the local community. Together, our families and staff help our children to become confident, independent learners that care for themselves, each other and the environment around them. Be brilliant, be bold, be kind and together we will believe, learn and achieve.

Attendance Lead: Russell Goodman

Rationale

At Marlborough St Mary's we aim for an environment that enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and all children should be at school and on time every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to achieve their potential.

Aims

- To raise attendance
- To improve punctuality
- To raise levels of attainment and achievement
- To maximise opportunities both in school and in later life
- To encourage an attitude, from parents/carers and pupils, of wanting to be at school to learn

Expectations

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- that they attend school regularly (we take this to be 96% or above)
- that they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day
- that they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school

We expect the following from parents/carers:

- to ensure their children attend school regularly (we take this to be 96% or above) and punctually
- to ensure that they contact the school as soon as is reasonably practical if their child is unable to attend
- to ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework
- to contact the school in confidence should any problems occurs that may affect their child's performance in school

Parents/carers and pupils can expect the following from school:

- regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- early contact with parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason
- immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us (Educational professionals have a legal duty to safeguard the welfare of children)
- recognition and reward for good attendance
- a quality education
- if a family is struggling with their child's attendance they can refer themselves to and be supported by the school's Family Support Advisor

Notifying the School

Parents and carers are asked to contact the school office by phone or in person if their child needs to be absent from school and to advise the reason as soon as possible. The school will record this message in the absence diary and give the absence the code relevant to the category of absence, whether authorised or unauthorised in the class register.

Authorised Absences

Medical and dentist appointments should be arranged outside the school day if possible. Where this is not possible it is expected that pupils only miss part of the day. Funerals can be authorised in most cases, as can religious observance. Sickness is also classed as an authorised absence.

Unauthorised Absences

These could include - shopping, visiting relatives, haircut, parents/carers unwell, brothers and sisters attending appointments or being unwell, unable to find school uniform, birthdays. Marlborough St. Mary's follows Wiltshire Council Guidelines with regard to Penalty Notices for persistent unauthorised absences.

Holidays

In line with 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance- August 2024, generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. All holiday requests must be made in writing to the Headteacher on the official form prior to the holiday being taken. If holiday is taken without an absence request form being submitted, we will ask for one to be completed on return.

Along with the Local Authority, the school supports the view that every lesson counts and discourages parents/carers from taking holidays in term time; **therefore, all holidays will be unauthorised.** However, there may be a few circumstances and reasons which fall into an acceptable category and these are clearly stated in our letter regarding the Wiltshire Council code of conduct for the taking of holidays in term time. A copy of the Wiltshire Council Penalty Notices leaflet is also attached to Holiday Request forms to remind parents/carers that they are likely to receive a fine for taking unauthorised holiday absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more in rolling 10 week period.

No holiday requests will be granted during the weeks in May when SATs take place for Year 6. Notification of the dates will be given to parents/carers as early as possible in the academic year.

Response to Absence including monitoring

The school operates a first day contact system regarding unexplained absence. At 9:45, the school office will transfer the names of any absent children to the Pastoral Support Manager. Any unexplained absences will be investigated by phone by the Pastoral Support Manager. If there is a large volume of absences, priority will be given to children with Safeguarding concerns or social care involvement then children who are severely absent and the persistently absent.

Any child who has an authorised absence e.g. sickness and falls into a category of concern will also be contacted to encourage back to school. *(There may be exceptions to this. For example, we may already know the reason for absence such as medical)*

This quick and reactive approach to absence will be monitored weekly by the Attendance Lead to assess impact. The Attendance lead will then work with the Pastoral Lead to judge, on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate next steps for any cases of concern. All actions will be recorded on the school's electronic recording system.

The school will notify Children's Services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a pupil who is on the child protection register.

Cases of Concern

If a child's absence is causing concern because they fall into an absence category, attendance is decreasing or there is a pattern of absence the following options may be explored:

- Supportive Phone Call
- Classdojo Message
- A written letter advising them of the absence process
- Supportive conversation with the child
- A home visit
- Face to Face meeting
- Attendance Contract
- Referral to outside agencies (inc [Education Welfare Officer](#) EWO)

Lateness

Pupils must be in school by 8:45. School starts at 8:45 and gates are locked as soon as parents have left the school site. Lateness is classed as any child coming into school after 8:45am. All children arriving after 8.45am must report to the office and sign in. The registers are taken electronically and are closed at 9.30am. Children arriving between 8:45 and 9.30 are given a late mark. Children arriving after registers have closed are officially absent for the morning session.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In addition to daily monitoring, formal monitoring meetings are held every term (6 times per academic year). These meetings are chaired by the Attendance Lead (Russell Goodman). In these meetings a detailed breakdown of absence is reviewed including overall rates for all children, persistent absence and vulnerable groups. The attendance team will examine any child with attendance below 96% and ensure that the most appropriate action (from the list above) is taken- if this has not already happened via the daily monitoring process.

Absence and lateness are continually monitored by the pastoral team and the attendance lead who will discuss problems initially with the pupils concerned, the class teacher and parents. Where children have persistent lateness problems the parents/carers will be invited into school to a formal meeting.

- In response to repeated episodes of lateness, a letter will be sent to parents/carers by the school with the aim of addressing the situation. If the situation does not improve, the parents/carers will be invited to a formal meeting with the Class teacher/Deputy Headteacher/Pastoral Support Manager
- Children with attendance between 85% and 96% will have their reasons for absence monitored
- Any child with an attendance of under 85% will have their records examined and may be drawn to the attention of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Attendance figures are regularly analysed by class, year group and whole school and are reported to the Governors' Teaching and Learning Committee.

Attendance of less than 90% will be classified as persistent absence.

Attendance of 50% or less will be classified as severe absence.

The school will meet with the EWO as required to discuss figures. All practices will be reviewed regularly.

Interventions

A range of intervention strategies will be discussed at meetings with the Headteacher, PSM and the Parent Support Advisor. These include:

- Educating older pupils to get to school safely by themselves.
- Incentive schemes.
- PSM created interventions.

- EWO initiatives
- Supporting parents with strategies to improve attendance.

If attendance does not improve, the EWO will progress legal routes to ensure parents/carers comply with attendance legislation.

Encouraging Good Attendance

The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance including but not limited to:

- Attendance certificates and stickers
- An adapted curriculum to encourage cohorts/individuals to school
- All children will be welcomed with an encouraging ethos to avoid school refusal
- A greeting system based upon Paul Dix research
- The teacher or TA will always be 'on the door' to meet & greet children
- Senior leaders will always be on the gate welcoming with visible enthusiasm
- Supportive staff strategically placed to offer support for those children who need it
- Invites to Breakfast club and After-school club
- Children having bespoke entry and exit plans to meet the needs of EBSA or neurodiversity
- Messages on ClassDojo informing families of exciting events happening the next day/week
- Individual messages to families showing a marked improvement in attendance
- Whole class rewards based on attendance
- Regular reminders on ClassDojo, newsletters and website about our children being HEROES- Here, Every day, Ready and On-time
- The expectations of good attendance explained at new starters' meetings
- Good attendance agreed as part of the school/home agreement
- Attendance statistics and information published on website

Enforcement

The school recognises that, despite the various levels of support described above, there may be times when enforcement is necessary. In line with the guidance from Wiltshire Council and Working Together to Improve School Attendance- August 2024, Marlborough St Mary's Primary School will work alongside the LA to enforce Penalty Notices. This information will be shared regularly with parents:

Penalty Notices

A penalty notice is an alternative to you being taken to court by the local authority. If your child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period, the school will inform our Education Welfare Service who may issue a penalty notice for each child to each parent. Anyone who has day to day care of a child is considered a 'parent' and legally responsible for making sure the child attends school, this could be a stepparent or a parent not living at the child's home address.

What is the cost?

The Department for Education outlines that fines for unauthorised school absences in the UK are £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.

These fines are issued by the local authority.

- Schools are required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons within a rolling 10-week period [DfE Update: 11 June 2025 - GOV.UK](#)
- Each parent can only receive up to 2 fines for the same child within a 3-year period
- If you receive a second fine within 3 years, it will be £160 (no reduced rate option)

If fines aren't paid:

- If you don't pay within 28 days, you can be prosecuted
- Prosecution can result in fines up to £2,500 and/or up to three months imprisonment
- A conviction can appear on a parent's DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'

It's important to note that these fines are issued **per parent**, so both parents can be fined separately for the same absence, and they apply **per child**, meaning multiple children absent would result in multiple fines.