St Mary's C.E. Primary and Nursery School

Attendance Policy

Growing together, learning together

Monitoring and Review
It is the responsibility of our governing body to agree and monitor school policies. The Curriculum and Standards Team have this responsibility, though the day-to-day management of it is devolved to the Headteacher.

As with all our policies, this was developed following a period of practice and consultation before being presented for Governors' consideration.

R Kendrew-Jones

Mission Statement
'Here at St Mary's Church of England Primary School, through our Christian values, we aspire to nurture and educate the whole child: caring for their well-being, celebrating their individual talents and abilities whilst encouraging them to become lifelong learners. It is our aim that children, parents and school staff should work together towards this end.'

Equal Opportunities
At Tickhill St Mary's School we are committed to giving all our children every opportunity to achieve the highest of standards. We acknowledge the right of every individual to be treated fairly and with respect regardless of appearance, age, race, gender identity, background, creed, attainment, ability or sexual orientation. We aim to fulfil this ideal through our policies and practice.

Christian Ethos
Tickhill St Mary's School is a Church of England School and, as such, we ensure that the Christian ethos is central to all our policies and practice.

Safeguarding Statement
St Mary's Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff to share this commitment.

Introduction
Regular attendance at school is essential to promote the education of all pupils. The school's ethos demonstrates that children feel that their presence in school is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late. The school will take appropriate action, when necessary, in order to promote the aims of the policy.

Every school day counts towards a child's future. Days off school add up to lost learning. In total there are 175 non-school days a year. This gives families the opportunity to:
- Spend time together
- Go on family visits
- Go on holiday
- Go on days out
- Attend routine appointments

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Attendance Policy

Tickhill St Mary's Primary have high expectations of their pupils regarding Attendance and Punctuality and recognise that there is a clear link between good attendance and pupil attainment; the more time a pupil spends in school, the more likely they are to improve their opportunity to fulfil their potential.
This policy supports our school ethos enabling us to live and learn together in an environment where everyone feels happy, safe and secure.

Our dedicated senior champion for attendance is: Rebecca Kendrew-Jones, Headteacher

Why Regular Attendance is so Important

Learning: 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 a child's regular attendance at school is the parent/guardian's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason may result in prosecution.

Safeguarding: A child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for a child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti- bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. To help us all to focus on this school will:

- Give details on whole school attendance on our website.
- Report at least twice yearly on how a child is performing in school and what their attendance and punctuality rate is.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying whole school and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through weekly class prize, termly certificates and termly attendance reward incentives.

The Law relating to Attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:- (a) to age, ability and aptitude (b) to any special educational needs he/she may have Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

The Law relating to Safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Understanding types of Absence

Schools are required by law to keep an attendance register and must mark whether a child is present or absent at each morning and afternoon session. If a child is absent, the register must also state whether the absence is AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED, this is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Within the context of the law, absences can only be approved by the school and not by the parents. Headteachers can refuse to authorise an absence if they do not believe the circumstances justify the absence. Parents should, therefore, cooperate with the school to enable them to mark school registers.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments, (supported by an appointment letter/card/slip/text), which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to Doncaster Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. These include:

- parents/guardians keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

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 resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, school should be contacted immediately.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and school requires full parent/guardian support and co-operation to tackle this. All absence is monitored and all PA cases are also automatically reported to the Doncaster Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following people have key responsibilities in the pursuit of high levels of attendance and punctuality:

Parents

- It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their child attends school every day that they are well enough to do so, and that they arrive on time.

Governors

- To set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy.

Headteacher

- To ensure that effective systems are in place to accurately reflect individual pupil and group and whole school attendance patterns.
- To monitor individual pupil, group and whole school attendance and punctuality.
- To work in partnership with key agencies if attendance and / or punctuality is an issue.
- To provide Governors with information to enable them to evaluate the success of policy and practice.
- To write to parents/carers regarding any concerns about their child's attendance, offering support with attendance and punctuality.
- To monitor the dates and attendance figures of when parents/carers are contacted about attendance.
- To arrange meetings with parents/carers to discuss support for those experiencing attendance difficulties.

Class Teacher

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class using the electronic register on the one drive.
- To respond promptly to any issue raised in the weekly analysis of registers by Office Staff.
- To organise work to be sent home for children in their class who are expected to be absent for an extended period through sickness.

Teaching Assistants

- Teaching Assistants are required to take the registers using the electronic register on the one drive if they are supervising the class at the beginning of the morning or afternoon sessions.

Office Staff

- To prepare, manage and co-ordinate the use of the SIMS.net Attendance Module.
- To monitor and track attendance patterns for all children and prepare relevant attendance reports.
- To contact parents/carers on the first day of their child's absence to establish the reason, if the parent has not already done so.
- To ensure that a satisfactory reason for every absence has been established for each child at the end of each week.
- To make a judgement in cooperation with the Headteacher as to whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Monitor 'target pupils'. These are pupils whose attendance fell below 90% in the previous academic year and to provide termly reports.
- Monitor those pupils whose attendance is below 95% in the current academic year.
- Produce attendance monitoring reports termly.
- To work with and seek support from the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service service and wider community.

Education Welfare Officer

- To support the whole school response to attendance through regular meetings and monitoring individual children's attendance.
- To support the school in its application of this policy.
- To support parents and carers in improving attendance and punctuality.
- To assist in enforcing the law regarding school attendance.

Administration

The school uses an Attendance Module provided by SIMS.net to store and monitor its legal responsibilities in relationship to attendance.

Registers are legal document and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. Registers are taken electronically by the class teacher or TA and a manual class document is printed by the School Office after the closure of the registration period.

Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Failure to compete a register accurately constitutes a safeguarding risk to pupils.

Session Times

Morning Session: 8.50am-12.00am
Afternoon session: 1.00pm – 3.20pm

Punctuality

A school has to take a register of all pupils first thing in a morning and sometime during the afternoon. The Government advice states that schools can keep the register open for up to 30 minutes; however, this can be a shorter period. If a pupil arrives late to school but whilst the register is still open, they are marked as Late (L).

If a pupil arrives at school after the register is closed, without a satisfactory reason, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) and may lead to prosecution for not ensuring your child has regular/punctual school attendance.

The school day starts at 8.55am and we expect children to be sitting at their desks ready to work at these times.

After these times doors are locked and all pupils are required to enter via the school office to receive their late mark (L). At 9.15am respectively registers are closed, and in accordance with the regulations they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but late after registration (U). This mark is recorded as an unauthorised absence resulting in a possible penalty notice if the problem persists. Late marks (L) and (U) will be taken into account on termly attendance rewards.

If a child has a persistent late record the parent/guardian will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and attendance team to resolve the issue, however the parent/guardian can approach the school at any time if they are having problems getting a child to school on time**.**

Absence Procedure

If a child is absent the parent/carer should:

• Contact school stating reason for absence before 8.50am on the first day of absence and each subsequent day of absence

• Bring a child back to school as soon as possible after an illness

If a child is absent school will:

• Telephone parents on the first day and each subsequent day of absence if school have not had contact

• If we cannot contact a parent/carer we will use all the contact details, and the emergency contacts you have given us to try to establish why your child is absent

• If school cannot make contact, a home visit will be made on that day, and the absence will be marked as unauthorised

• If contact is still not made, school may refer to the Social Care team and /or police as a safeguarding incident.

• If a child is not back in school (and has reported in an illness) a member of the admin team will phone parents on day four to advise that a home visit will take place on day five (unless there is a school holiday or family holiday planned; in this case we will visit on the day before the holiday)

• If school attempt a home visit (with warning given) and the pupil is not seen, the entire absence will be unauthorised

• If a child is absent for a longer period, a weekly home visit will take place

• Monitor attendance and offer support and assistance to parents/guardians of pupils whose attendance percentage drops below 96% as follows;

1. Arrange early intervention by the Headteacher or Child and Family Support Worker who will speak to the Parent/Carer
2. If no immediate improvement, staff will write to the Parent/Carer to offer support and guidance (attendance letter 1)
3. If no improvement we will write again (attendance letter 2) and further absences will not be authorised unless there is proof of a justifiable reason for absence. At this point, parents will be invited to attend an attendance meeting in school with the Education Welfare Officer and a member of the senior leadership team. This will be followed by a support plan and 15 day monitoring period where we would expect to see full attendance to avoid progressing to further action. Prior to the meeting school staff may conduct a Voice of the Child to gain the child's opinion on school attendance and reasons for absence.
4. Submit a Referral to the L.A., who will arrange a Panel Meeting to implement strategies to improve attendance. These may be; Education Supervision Order, PACE (Police Interview Under Caution), Parenting Order or Fixed Penalty Notice
5. Prosecution under Section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance

Telephone Numbers

There are times when school are required to contact parents/guardians, including absence, therefore it is the parents/guardians responsibility to ensure all contact numbers are kept up to date and any changes are reported to the school office immediately.

Children Missing

Parents/carers must contact the school on each day of absence. School expects a call before the start of the school day if possible and a message should be left on the answering machine. If a call has not been received when registers close, school will investigate the reason for absence by contacting the parents or carers.

Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service (APWS)

Parents/guardians are expected to contact school at an early stage in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties arise, the school may refer the child to the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement; however, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the parent/guardian may be given a penalty notice of £80, rising to £160 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the fine could result in prosecution and a further fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence of up to 3 months. The court may also issue an Education Supervision Order, a PACE (Police Interview Under Caution) or Parenting Order. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the APWS themselves to ask for help or information:
Telephone: 01302 736504
Email: APWS@doncaster.gov.uk
Website: www.doncaster.gov.uk and search for 'school attendance'.

Applications for Leave

Applications for leave are not granted.

Parents may request leave for pupils during term time if they consider that the request is due to an essential and exceptional circumstance. Leave may be granted at the discretion of the Headteacher, if the reason for leave means it could not reasonably be taken at a time other than during the school term and where there are exceptional or compassionate grounds.

Holidays During Term Time

The law says that parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time and can only request leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances. If you take your child on holiday during term-time without the school's authorisation this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and could result in action being taken against parents or carers.

How do I request leave of absence?

All requests should be made on a Request for Leave of Absence which is available from our school office. You should also submit any evidence to support your request. This should be submitted no later than 21 days before the start of the absence**.**

Will the school authorise taking my child away during term-time?

The legislation for authorising leave of absence requests (holidays) will only be granted for exceptional circumstances. The headteacher will consider and respond to your request. It's up to the headteacher how many days your child can be away from school if leave is granted.

What happens if the headteacher does not agree my request?

• Your child's absence will be marked as unauthorised absence and you will be informed of this
• If you proceed to take your child out of school, school will request for the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice
• The first time Penalty Notice amount will be: £160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.
• The second time penalty notice amount will be: £160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days. (No option to pay at £80 level)
• Third Offence and any further offences (within 3 years) The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/guardians and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted