

Attendance & Absence in Term-Time policy

St. Michael's CE Primary School



*Creating a community where we learn together through:
respect, kindness, curiosity and faith.*

Approved by:

Sally Coneron –
Chair of Governors

Date: November 2024

Last reviewed on:

Autumn 2024

Next review due by:

Autumn 2025

Introduction

St. Michael's CE Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, a high level of attendance is essential. As a school we strongly discourage unauthorised absence especially term time holidays. The primary responsibility for ensuring that children attend school rests with their parents/carers. However, promoting attendance and tackling absence is the responsibility of school and agencies within the local authority.

Our goal is for 100% attendance for all children and the importance of good attendance and punctuality will be conveyed to pupils and parents on a regular basis. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school. We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

School attendance is subject to Education Law and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE) and the local authority. This policy contains the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance target.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

The school's attendance officer is Emma Klinker, Deputy Headteacher. Attendance queries should be directed for the attention of the Attendance Officer by email: office@stmichaelsce.co.uk

Attendance Expectations and School Procedures

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils. Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day that they are required to be at school, for the full day.

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised or unauthorised. Only the Headteacher, or a member of staff acting on their behalf, can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

- Morning registration will take place from 8.50am and will close at 9.15am. From 8:35am, the school gates will be open for children to enter school and complete a 'morning motivation' task in their classroom.
- The school uses Arbor to keep attendance registers as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities. Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session.
- Children are expected to be in school no later than 8.50am when the class teachers will take the register.
- Children arriving at school after 8.50am must enter with their parent/carer via the school office as the playground gates will be closed at this time. Any pupil arriving after this time and before the registers close at 9.15am, will be treated as present but will be marked as late before the registers close (L). Pupils arriving after the registers close at 9.15am will be recorded as unauthorised (U).
- The afternoon registration is at 1.00pm. Registration will close at 1.15pm
- Pupils and parents will be encouraged to communicate any concerns related to attendance and absence as soon as possible to the relevant member of staff.

Absence Procedures

Parents will be required to contact the school office via telephone or email before 9.00am on the first day of their child's absence and any subsequent days of absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last. Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school to report the absence by the close of the morning register, office staff will contact the parent by telephone call as soon as is practical on the first day that they do not attend school. The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.

- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school register system.

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

In the case of Persistent Absence, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the attendance officer. The school will inform the Local Authority through the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), on a half-termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 5 school days or more without authorisation. If a pupil's attendance drops below 90 percent, the attendance officer will be informed, a letter will be sent to parents and the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer will be informed at the half-termly meeting.

Absence in Term-time

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 on an individual basis, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, pupil's previous attendance record and relevant context behind the request. The Headteacher's decision is not subject to appeal; however, the school will be sympathetic to requests for absence by parents, and will not deny any request without good reason. If the absence request could warrant a penalty notice due to the duration and purpose of the absence, the local authority Educational Welfare Officer will be consulted to support these outcomes (please refer to the section on 'legal intervention and penalty notices').

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. Where the absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. The school is not likely to grant leaves of absence for the purposes of family holidays.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes

- Visiting secondary school setting open days.

Requests for leave **will not** be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

Other Authorised Activities

This includes activities such as: performances and activities, including paid work, sporting competitions at a level which requires you to compete during school term-time, music gradings.

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances or activities, whether they receive payment or not, which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school's absence(s). Additional arrangements will be made by the school for pupils engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education – this may involve private teaching. These arrangements will be approved by the LA who will ensure that the arrangements are suitable for the pupil. The pupil will receive education that, when taken together over the term of the licence, amounts to a minimum of three hours per day that the pupil would be required to attend a school maintained by the LA issuing the licence. This requirement will be met by ensuring a pupil receives an education:

- For not less than six hours a week; and
- During each complete period of four weeks (or if there is a period of less than four weeks, then during that period), for periods of time not less than three hours a day; and
- On days where the pupil would be required to attend school if they were attending a school maintained by the LA; and
- For not more than five hours on any such day. Where a licence has been granted by the LA and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the school. Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the LA, it is at the discretion of the headteacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day. The headteacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a pupil's attendance would fall below 96 percent. Where a

licence has not been obtained, the headteacher will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

Medical and Dental Appointments

We encourage all medical and dental appointments to be made outside of school hours where possible. 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. Where it is not possible to arrange it out of school, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Religious Observance

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least two weeks advance. The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion. The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

SEND and Health-related Absences

The school recognises that pupils with more complex SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate. Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. All pupils will be supported with their mental health in accordance with the school's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy. If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

Will work with any professionals to support off-site learning if necessary.

- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with more complex SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

Attendance Intervention

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the attendance officer, supported by the SLT and the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer, will:

- Establish the barriers to attendance.
- Establish interventions specific to the child's need in order to support them attending school
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews as required
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
 - Sending letters to parents once attendance falls below 90% following a half-termly meeting with the Educational Welfare Officer. This letter is sent on the understanding that children can become unwell and might have miss school for this reason but we are still obliged to share with you when their attendance falls below 90%.
 - Engaging with LA attendance teams and the EWO.
 - The school will use attendance data to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.
 - Using fixed penalty notices.

Legal Intervention and Penalty Notices

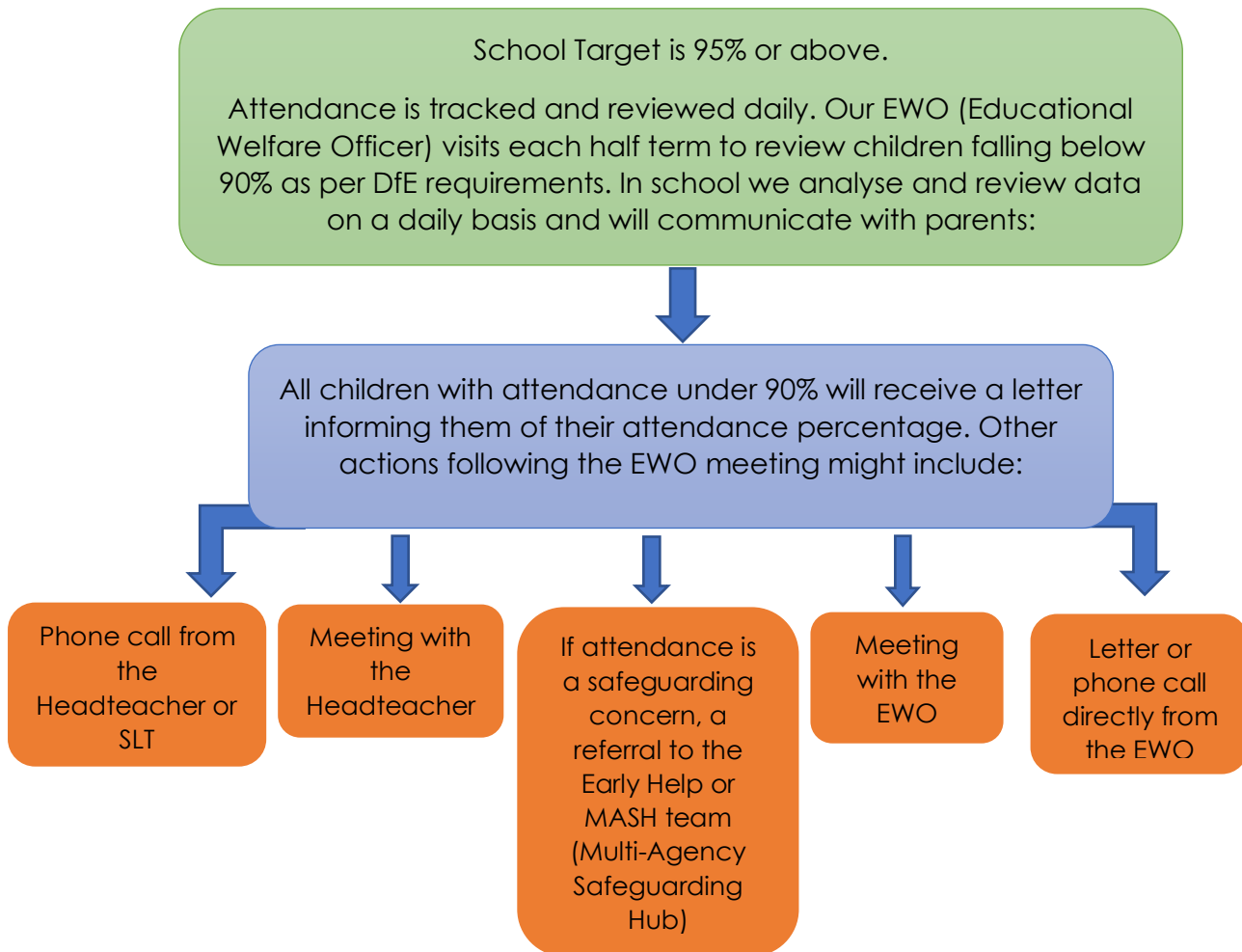
The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to

improve attendance have not had the desired effect after one term, the attendance officer will consider:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team.
- Working with the LA to support the family
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.
- Where the above measures are not effective, the Headteacher or local authority can issue a fixed penalty notice. These are following the introduction of a new National Framework for Penalty Notices on 19th August 2024:
 - Penalty notices will be considered for any 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in 10 weeks. 5 consecutive days of term-time absence leave can trigger a penalty notice.
 - For the first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised term-time leave or irregular attendance, the amount will be £160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days. This reduces to £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days.
 - For the second offence, within three years of the first offence, a penalty notice will issued for unauthorised term time leave or irregular attendance, the amount will be £160 per parent per child to be paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for early payment.
 - For the third offence onwards, within three years of the first offence, a notice will not be presented and the case instead will be presented straight to the magistrate's court. Fines can be around £2500 per parent, per child and can be shown as a criminal record.
- Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice, the school will work with the Local Authority to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Attendance Officer, Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team. The next scheduled review date for this policy is autumn term 2025. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

St Michael's CE Primary School Attendance Flowchart



Appendix: Attendance Forms and Letters

1) Letter for parents/carers following Educational Welfare Officer school visit. Attendance below 90%.



St. Michael's C.E. Primary School

School Road, Sunninghill, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 7AD
Tel 01344 622962 Fax 01344 873763

Dear Parent/Carer,

Our Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), Jo Barnes, visited school on When working with the EWO, we must identify any child who has an attendance figure below 90%. She viewed 's attendance and has asked us to make you aware that their attendance is below this level at% (5th September –).

In order to achieve a child's full potential, research shows that their attendance needs to be above 95% which is also our school and national attendance target.

We understand that children can become unwell and that sickness is sometimes unavoidable or absence is sometimes required, for example 48 hours absence for sickness bugs. However, we are required by the local authority and the Educational Welfare Officer to bring to your attention that their attendance is below a certain level.

Should you require any support in improving your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact myself, Mrs Klinker, or Mr Thompson. Please note that the EWO will be revisiting the school to review attendance in the next half term.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs E Klinker

Deputy Headteacher

2) Letter for parents/carers of a child under 5 following Educational Welfare Officer school visit. Attendance below 90%.



St. Michael's C.E. Primary School

School Road, Sunninghill, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 7AD
Tel 01344 622962 Fax 01344 873763

Dear Parent/Carer,

Our Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), Jo Barnes, visited school on

When working with the EWO, we must identify any children who have an attendance figure below 90%. She viewed 's attendance and is concerned that it is too low at% (September 5th –)

We recognise that your child is not yet five years old and that there is no legal obligation for them to attend school but we wanted to make you aware that in order to achieve a child's full potential, research shows that their attendance needs to be above 95% which is also our school and national attendance target. We understand that children can become unwell but we are required by the local authority and the Educational Welfare Officer to inform you if their attendance is below a certain level.

Should you require any support in improving your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact myself, Mrs Klinker, or Mr Thompson.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs E Klinker,

Deputy Headteacher

3) Special absence request form

Special Absence Request Form

A request must be received by the school at least 2 weeks in advance of the first day of absence and/or PRIOR to making any arrangements ie. booking flights

Please note that it is only the school, within the context of the law, which can approve absences in terms whether in "special" or "exceptional" circumstances, NOT the parents/carers. *(Please see the Attendance & Absence in Term-time policy for more information – a copy is on the school website and available in the school office)*

Name of pupil		Date of birth	
		Class	
Address			
SPECIAL ABSENCE REQUESTED			
Start date of absence		Return date to school	
Reason for special absence request:			
I understand that keeping my child off school if my request is not granted, will result in the absence being recorded as Unauthorised and may incur a penalty notice charge.			
Name of Parent/Carer			
Signature		Date	

For School Use:

Class Teacher – would leave be detrimental to the education of this pupil Yes / No
 Signed by the Class Teacher: Date:
 Headteacher – reason for request being authorised:
 Headteacher – reason for request being unauthorised:
 Signed by Headteacher: Date:

4) Holiday request for family holiday during term-time letter of response – unauthorised holiday.



St. Michael's C.E. Primary School

School Road, Sunninghill, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 7AD
Tel 01344 622962 Fax 01344 873763

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you following your request of absence for a family holiday during term time. This holiday has been unauthorised and may now result in a penalty notice. As a result of your holiday request, your child's attendance percentage will now fall from their current percentage of%. If you take your child on holiday and they miss school, you need to be aware that this will impact on their progress.

Your child's attendance is currently%. If you take your child on holiday and they miss days of school, you need to be aware that this will impact on their progress.

It is imperative that you really consider their attendance for the rest of this academic year in order to achieve above 95% attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs E Klinker

Deputy Headteacher