

Cottesmore St Mary Catholic Primary School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



'Mane nobiscum Domine'
(Abide with us O Lord)

Date of policy review: January 2020

Next review: January 2021

Policy written by: Anna Mullans

Policy reviewed & passed by: Pupils, Parents and Community Committee

Key person responsible for Attendance: Rachel Breen and Anna Mullans
Attendance Leader: Ruth Yahiatene

Other policies linked to this policy:
Health&Safety and Child Protection and Safeguarding

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Mission Statement

God made each one of us, we are all His disciples.

We believe in ourselves and help each other to do our best, respecting each other's differences and including everyone.

We show care for others, especially by helping those in need and acting as God wants us to whilst living the Gospel daily.

We pray and worship together and so grow closer to God and each other, celebrating when others do well. We are part of God's family, supporting other people in school, at home, at church and in the world around us.

Mane nobiscum Domine - Abide with us Lord.



We want the children who leave our school to make the most of every learning opportunity so that they can grow into the best people they can be, fulfilling their dreams and God's special plan for them, being happy and confident and joyfully showing to others their faith in God.

National Minimum Attendance 90%

National Average Attendance 96%

(Persistent absence is identified as anything under 90%)

Cottesmore St Mary Attendance Target 97%

General Procedures

- All registers are completed on SIMs 8.55am and are reviewed by the office by 9.30am. In the afternoon, registers are completed on SIMs by 12:45 for KS1 and 1:05 for KS2 and are reviewed by the office at 1:10pm.

- Gates are locked at 8.50am and children who are late are required to access school via the front office.
- Children arriving late will sign in at the front Office.
- Attendance office staff logs the names of all children who have arrived late.

- Parents/Carer's are requested to notify the school Via Studybugs App by 9am if their child is late or absent.
- Parents/Carer's must advise the school office if their child will arrive late, after 9.15am. If this is not the case children will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U) for the part of the day they have missed.

- Children's attendance will be recorded by the attendance leader by 10 am and parents/carers of those without recorded reasons will be contacted by the school

Monitoring

Attendance for all pupils below 90% is monitored half- termly by Attendance Leader. Headteacher informed of findings.

Names logged of all those children with below 90% attendance.

The Attendance Leader will send a letter to let parents/carers know that their child's attendance has fallen below 90%. Notes from responses will be logged.

If there is no significant improvement after half a term from the dated letter, parents will be invited to a meeting with the Attendance Leader to discuss concerns / put actions in place. Notes from meeting will be logged.

If there is no significant improvement parents will be invited to a formal meeting with the Headteacher and Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) can be contacted. The EWO will inform parents of possible future action and try and support them in order to improve attendance.

- Attendance Leader will inform Headteacher of classes with the highest attendance half termly. These will be celebrated.
- Attendance Leader to track number of authorised and unauthorised absences half termly and inform Headteacher.
- Attendance leader will advise Headteacher of specific vulnerable group's attendance half termly.

Exceptional Circumstances

- Requests for leave of absence during term time will generally not be permitted. However in the event of exceptional circumstances for example medical reasons or a specific family issue such as bereavement these will be considered.
- Only a written request to the Headteacher for an exceptional circumstance will be considered. These should be given to school a month before the event (unless in exceptional circumstances). This must be completed on a school form.
- A request by email sent to the Headteacher for an exceptional circumstance will not be considered.

Fixed Penalty fines for Attendance

Brighton and Hove Council Guidance on issuing fixed penalty fines, for parent is detailed below.

Reasons for getting a fine

You can get a fine if:

- you take your child on holiday during a school term
- your child chooses not to go to school, this is called truancy
- your child arrives to school late, after registration has closed, 6 or more times (6 half day morning or afternoon sessions) within 6 school weeks
- your child misses school for 3 or more days (6 half day morning or afternoon sessions) within a school term

How much you need to pay and when

Each parent or carer has to pay £60 for each child that was absent. You have 21 days to pay the fine.

If you don't pay within 21 days the fine will double and go up to £120. You will have 7 days to pay.

If you don't agree with the fine

You can't appeal this type of fine. We give out fines based on the school's records.

Please talk to your child's school if you think your child's was recorded as absent incorrectly, or if you need some advice.

If you don't pay the fine

If you don't pay the fine within 28 days of receiving it you may be taken to court.

You could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a prison sentence of up to 3 months.

More information

Email the Access to Education Team at attendanceteam@brighton-hove.gov.uk for help and advice.

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1.1 Introduction

The Staff and Governing Body at Cottesmore St Mary School give a high priority to its pupils' educational achievement and believe that maximum pupil attendance and punctuality are essential in order for all young people to achieve their full potential. This policy has been introduced in order to help achieve this aim and the staff and governors are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that it is effectively and appropriately implemented.

When taking decisions about issuing fixed penalty notices to parents for their child's poor attendance, the school adheres to the Brighton and Hove City Council Code of Conduct.

Whole school attendance targets are set annually.

1.2 Background and Principles

There are strong and proven links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. We are committed to working in partnership with Brighton & Hove City Council to reduce overall absence and persistent absence. The school supports Brighton and Hove City Council's 'Miss School, Miss Out' initiative and strives to ensure all staff, pupils, parents and carers place a high value on school attendance. We are committed to actively promoting Early Help and promoting multi-agency support for vulnerable children and their families.

When your child attends school punctually and on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. Regular attenders usually leave school with more qualifications and access to greater employment opportunities. When pupils apply for college placements or apply for employment, the school will be asked for a reference which includes a history of pupil's attendance and punctuality. If this is poor it could affect their ability to find employment or a college placement. Please note that the increase in participation age means pupils must stay in education or training until their 18th Birthday.

Brighton and Hove City Council's 'Miss School, Miss Out' initiative aims to raise awareness of the importance of regular attendance, helping schools, parents and children to implement simple working practices to reduce absenteeism. If your child is missing lessons, this could affect their learning in the following ways:

- Your child's attainment and progress suffers when they are not in school
- Pupils suffer a break in the continuity of their learning or miss important topics.
- Pupils lack confidence due to the fact that they have missed mid-topic information and are unable to understand or catch up – much of the work missed is never made up, which puts pupils at a disadvantage at exam time.
- Disruption to your child's learning, friendships and social development.

What is good attendance?

At Cottesmore St Mary School, we expect all our pupils to aim for 100% attendance and punctuality.

Attendance is shared with parents, at the end of the year, using to grid below.

Attendance	
Exceptional	Attendance is 99% or higher. Always in school on time.
Good	Attendance is 96% or higher. Very rarely late to school.
Room for Improvement	Attendance falls below 96% or occasionally late to school.
Cause for Concern	Attendance is below 90% or frequently late to school.

1.3 Definitions of Absence

Pupils should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information and evidence about the cause of any absence is always required, by phone or Studybugs App, before 9am on the morning of absence.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Medical cards which state the appointment date and time will be required, when possible.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. This includes:

Parents/Carers keeping children off school because sibling is unwell

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily including because they were tired or had a late night
- 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 authorised

This type of absence can lead to the school referring cases to the Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team for fixed penalty notices and prosecution. Whilst any student may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best addressed between the school, the parents/carers and the child as soon as they are identified.

Collecting your child from school and After school clubs

Early collections from school are not permitted unless for a medical appointment. Parents are asked, whenever possible to make appointments out of school hours. When this is not possible, parents will be asked to provide evidence of appointments.

Children must be collected by 3pm. Pupils who are not collected on time will be taken to the office and their names will be logged. Persistent late collections will be monitored and the Attendance lead will contact parents.

Children must be collected from clubs on time.

Walking home alone

Should Parent's Carer's feel that their child is mature enough to walk home alone, school ask that a form is filled in and returned to the Attendance lead. Parent/Carer's are expected to have considered safety aspects as highlighted in the Permission for walking home letter (Appendix).

School recommends that this is appropriate for children in Year 5 and 6 only.

1.4 Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil is defined as a 'Persistent Absentee' if they fall below 90% of possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

If your child has attendance that has fallen below 90% over a six-week period, the school will follow the Brighton and Hove City Council guidance set out in their School Attendance Toolkit. This will involve raising awareness of the attendance concern with parents/carers, seeking medical evidence to explain low attendance, if needed, consistently reviewing attendance every two weeks and inviting parents to attend an Attendance Support Meeting to discuss concerns. Parents and carers will receive standard letters at every stage in the process to inform them of the school's concerns and any potential consequences of a failure to improve attendance. If there is little or no improvement in attendance, despite the intervention and support detailed above, the school will refer the case to the Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team to request that a fixed penalty notice be issued. A family may receive up to three fixed penalty notices in a 12 month period.

If a family has received the maximum of three fixed penalty notices in a twelve month period, and there has been little or no improve in attendance, the school will refer the case to the Council's Behaviour and Assessment Team to consider prosecution.

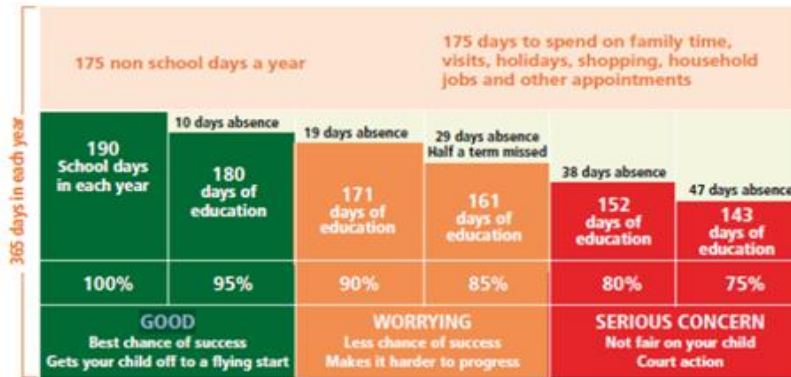


Figure A taken from 'Miss School, Miss Out' initiative (2019)

1.4 Holiday Requests/ Term Time Absence

Time off school for holidays is not a right, therefore, parents/carers are discouraged from arranging holidays, either in the UK or abroad, or visits to their country of family origin, during term-time.

The Head Teacher will only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances (see section 3 below). Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis. The Head Teacher reports, termly, to The Pupil, Parents and Community Committee and Main Governing body and attendance forms part of their focussed school visit.

The school operates a formal application process for parents/carers wishing to take the young person out of school during term times. An application should be made in writing to the Headteacher, via the school office, at least ten days in advance. The application does not, in itself, guarantee that the request will be authorised. The Head Teacher is authorised to turn applications down and refuse permission for parents/carers to take their children out of school during term time. Such a decision will have been made in the best interests of the student's educational progress and attainment.

Parents who take their children out of school during term time without the authorisation of the Head teacher not only damage their children's educational opportunities but also risk being issued with a fixed penalty notice, being prosecuted in court and losing the young persons' place at the school.

2. Fixed Penalty Notices

The school adheres to the Brighton and Hove City Council's Code of Conduct with regards to student attendance. It may therefore be necessary to issue fixed-penalty notices in some circumstances.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notice might be issued

Unauthorised Absence/Truancy:

- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed amounting to 10 more sessions in 10 weeks).
- Pupils whose attendance has not reached a satisfactory (90% attendance – 2015 threshold) level during a 6 week period following intensive support i.e. truancy patrol.
- Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification in a fixed term or permanent exclusion.
- Penalty notices will be issued as a result of persistent absence as outlined in section 2.4 of this policy.
- Penalty notices will be issued for all unauthorised holidays taken during term time.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1st September 2013, removes reference to holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments now make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances (no definition is given within this legislation). However, the NAHT guidance suggests the following as circumstances which might be considered to be exceptional:

- Bereavement
- Serious illness of a close family member
- Wedding, baptisms within the immediate family
- Service personnel returning from a long tour of duty

The Headteacher will determine the number of sessions a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. The school will try to ensure that all literature provided to parents, such as Prospectus, Attendance and Behaviour Policies, Home School Agreements, newsletters and website information includes the warning that parents may be issued with a penalty notice if a holiday is taken without permission.

If the decision is made not to authorise, the Headteacher (or designated deputy) will send a letter to the parent confirming that a leave of absence has not been authorised and will include a warning that a penalty notice may be issued.

If a holiday is then taken without authorisation the school will complete a request, signed by the Headteacher (or designated deputy), that consideration be given to the issue of a penalty notice. The request will be sent to the Behaviour and Attendance Team within two weeks of the pupil returning to school. The Behaviour and Attendance Team will then issue a penalty notice if appropriate. Penalty Notices for term time holidays may be issued if

- Unauthorised holidays have been taken within the term time; Or
- Excessive delayed return from holiday without prior school agreement (beyond one additional school day).

Withdrawal of Penalty Notice

Penalty notices may only be withdrawn in the following circumstances

- a. when it is issued to the wrong person
- b. when issued outside the terms of the Code of Conduct
- c. when an offence has not been committed
- d. if a parent can prove it was delivered to the wrong address
- e. if there are unforeseen exceptional circumstances the leave of absence maybe authorised

Prosecution for non-payment of a fine

The prosecution would not be for non-payment of the fine, but for the original offence of failing to ensure child's regular attendance at school. The Council may use the fact that a penalty notice has been issued and remains unpaid as evidence. The Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team would look at all the circumstances of the case when assessing the likelihood of securing a conviction for the original attendance offence. If the decision is made to proceed with prosecution then as a matter of good practice, in any interviews with parents, the Local Authority will act in accordance with the spirit of the Codes of Practice set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), ensuring that the parent understands the basis for the interview, their needs are taken into account, their rights are explained and the interviews are conducted fairly.

3.Absence Procedures

3.1 If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us via Studybugs App or phone by 9.00 am on the first day of absence
- If the reason for the absence is sickness and it is likely that the absence will continue for more than 5 school days, medical evidence should be obtained and sent to the school.

3.2 If your child is absent we will:

- Text or telephone you on each day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if absence persists
- Refer the matter to the Brighton and Hove City Council's Access to education service, if the situation does not improve.



We have adopted Studybugs App to support Parents/Carers to inform the school of their child's absence in a convenient way. This is the preferred mode of contact between Parents/Carers and school. The information should be inputted by Parents/Carers by 9am, for the school office to generate the report. The App can be updated by parents for successional absences.

4. Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. The school day begins at 8.50am and pupils must be in their classroom or assembly at this time to be registered for the morning session.

How we manage punctuality:

08. 50 am – it is expected that children will arrive ready for school by 8.50 am

08.55 am – children are considered late if not in class by closure of register at that time

09.15am – If the school have not heard from the parent by this time they will call the parent for a reason for the child's absence.

Our school gates close at 8.50am and children and families who are late are required to sign in through the office entrance. These children will be marked as 'Late' in the register (L)

At Cottesmore St Mary's we also phone for safeguarding reasons. For example a child might walk to school and it is reassuring for parents to know that if the child does not arrive in school they will be phoned and then appropriate action taken if a child is missing.

If your child is persistently late, you will be contacted by the school who will discuss their concerns with you. Any student who receives 10 unauthorised lates in a 10 week period may be referred to the Council's Access to education service, resulting in a fixed penalty notice.

If a child is collected early for a medical appointment, proof of the appointment must be shown to the office staff. Any other request for an early collection must be made with 24 hours' notice and correspondence to explain reasons. These will be logged and monitored by Anna Mullans, Attendance lead.

5. Strategies for Maximising Attendance

Following the usual school philosophy, promotion of good practice is key to eradicating poor practice. Methods used include:

- Regular reminders in the newsletter
- Class of the week with highest attendance published in school weekly newsletter
- An attendance 'Bear' will visit the class achieving the highest attendance, half termly, and will remain in the class for this period of time.

- Focus on attendance/punctuality in school reports and parent consultation meetings
High levels of attendance are promoted when welcoming new parents and children.

If a child's attendance level drops below 90%, the school will send you a letter informing you monitoring the child's attendance level.

If after a six week period, a child's attendance level continues to drop below 90%, the school will send you a letter inviting you in to discuss the implementation of an attendance intervention, detail in section 2.4 of this policy.

6. Summary of Responsibilities

Pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the school day.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem which is making it hard for them to attend school regularly

Parents/carers will:

- Encourage their children to attend school every day and on time in accordance with the signed home/school agreement
- Ensure that they contact the school by 9am whenever their child is unable to attend school
- Ensure that their children arrive in school fully prepared for the school day
- Provide the school with up to date home, work and emergency contact numbers
- A request for absence in exceptional circumstances (see appendix 3) must be submitted in advance using the official 'request for absence' form obtained from and returned to Student Services (the Head Teacher will then inform you of the decision)
- Do not request term time absences during periods where there are public examinations and assessments (unless there are exceptional circumstances)

The Head Teacher will:

- Set annual targets for attendance
- Inform governors of attendance data through Head teacher reports

Attendance lead will:

- Inform parents/carers of attendance percentages for their child/children via the annual profile
- Oversee the Attendance policy
- Input attendance data on a daily basis

- Generate unexplained absence/punctuality letters to parents/carers
- Meet with Parents/Carers to discuss attendance concerns and interventions
- Inform teachers identifying levels of absence/lateness causing concern

Office/Pupil Services staff will:

- Input attendance and absences into the school database
- Contact parents to request reasons for absence
- Oversee the usage and management of Studybugs
- Generate attendance figures and liaise with the attendance lead

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the school has a whole school attendance policy in place
- Receive annual reports from the Head teacher in respect of attendance data and trends
- Monitor the effectiveness of the whole school policy

The Local Authority will:

- Support and challenge schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
- Upon the request of the school, the Local Authority has the power to issue parents or carers with a fine for unauthorised absence under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- The Local Authority also has the power to prosecute parents or carers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if the fine is not paid.

Appendices

1 Absence concern letter

2 Persistent Absentees Meeting request

3 Punctuality concern letter

4 Exceptional circumstances request

5 Permission for walking home alone letter

6 Attendance codes