



Attendance Policy

Last reviewed Spring Term 2022 (to be reviewed annually)

Next Review date: Autumn Term 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 St Michael's Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy has been drawn up after consultation with the whole community and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.
- 1.4 The Governing Body is committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness in the operation of this policy. In addition, the Governing Body values diversity and is committed to ensuring that no individuals are discriminated against on any grounds, including the protected characteristics included in the Equality Act 2010.

2. School's roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at St Michael's Primary School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

2.2 Attendance Leader

Our Administrative Assistant (referred to as Attendance Leader in this policy) will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person, known as the Attendance Leader, will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared monthly with the Headteacher, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body termly. She will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage so that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

2.3 Registration

- i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. St Michael's Primary School uses electronic registration. Teachers or an authorised member of support staff will mark the electronic register with a 'present' code or 'N' – see codes below. Staff in the office will check all 'N' codes and replace them if necessary before uploading to the pupil database. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers using the prescribed codes (shown below).

REGISTER CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT dual registration)	Approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e., pupil attending other establishment)	Approved education activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved educational activity

L	Late (before registration closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointment	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity
R	Religious observation	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity
W	Work experience	Approved educational activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

- ii) The register will be called promptly at **8.50 am** and **1.10 pm** by each class teacher and a mark of 'present' or 'N' will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.
- iii) The registers will close at **9.00 am** and **1.20 pm**. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive after 8.50am, but before the register closes at 9.00 am or 1.20 pm, will be counted as (L) late before register closes. This is a **present** code but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness (see para. 4.6 on page 7).

2.4 **Categorising absence**

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher.
- ii) St Michael's Primary School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that

inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at St Michael's Primary School will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their children's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school.**

- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised.
- iv) Absences will be authorised in the following circumstances:
- (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example:
- a pupil is to participate in an approved performance or sporting activity for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - in **exceptional** circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance (see Page 12 for the Guide for Parents on term-time holidays and Appendix 2 – Page 15 – for the Absence Request Form)
- (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
- (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand);
- (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
- (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs;
- (f) the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;
- (g) the pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;

- (h) in other **exceptional circumstances** (e.g. a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.
- v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:
 - no explanation has been given by the parent;
 - the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
 - the pupil is staying at home to mind the house;
 - the pupil is shopping during school hours;
 - the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, e.g. a birthday;
 - the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission or approval;
 - the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

2.5 Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.6 Staff training

The School Attendance Leader will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. Collection and analysis of data

- 3.1 The Attendance Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the Headteacher, parents and the governing body. (See para. above). The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.
- 3.2 Attendance is monitored by year group, class group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.
- 3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

- 4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at St Michael's Primary School and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in classes. Parents are regularly reminded in

newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

- 4.2 St Michael's Primary School has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences within a week. The Attendance Leader telephones parents to seek clarification and informs the Head teacher if further action is required.

4.3 First-day calling

Parents are asked to telephone school by 9 o'clock on the first day of absence, indicating the reasons and likely length of time of the absence. If this telephone call is not received, St Michael's Primary School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will send a letter to them by first class post.

4.4 School Strategies to Tackle Absence

The Attendance Leader is responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that St Michael's Primary School intervene in non attendance at an early stage. Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's absence the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them. St Michael's Primary School may consider the implementation of a EHA (Early Help Assessment) should the need arise. A 'Safe and Well Check' may also be requested by the school.

4.5 Referral to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer

If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specified time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer. Regulations (Education Pupil Regulations 2006) require schools to inform the LA of every pupil who has been continuously absent without a good reason (i.e. the absence is unauthorised) for 20 school sessions (10 days) over a period of 12 weeks, excluding school holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive. This may result in a Penalty Notice being served.

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the

parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the County Council. He/she will also try to resolve the situation with voluntary support, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed these Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 90% in any term without good reason, a referral to the Education Welfare Service will be made by the school. Following investigation any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

4.6 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes (see para. 2.4 (iii) on page 4) will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late (in this case, the absent mark will be changed to a late mark). A pupil who has 10 unauthorised late marks (not necessarily consecutive) over a period of 12 school weeks (excluding school holidays) may receive a penalty warning notice and a fine.

4.7 Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes will be marked late.

4.8 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the school office. **It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.**

4.9 For the same reason it is important that pupils / students leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day leave with an approved adult from the main reception area; having informed the office staff or Head teacher that they are leaving. Parents should not take children from school unless either of these members of staff (or their replacements) have been informed. There is a book in the reception area for children to sign in as late or to sign out, giving a reason for not being in school.

5. Term-time holidays

Term-time holidays are discouraged and should only be planned in exceptional circumstances. In these situations St Michael's Primary School will consider each application individually; its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended holiday. From 1st September 2013, the law states that schools should not authorise leave of absence unless:

- An application has been made **in advance** by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides AND
- The Head teacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. St Michael's Primary School will consider authorising holidays for (exceptional circumstances):

St Michael's Primary School will consider authorising holidays for (exceptional circumstances):

- service personnel who are prevented from taking holidays out of term-time;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

Requests for holidays for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

St Michael's Primary School will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

St Michael's Primary School will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests ie: SATs examinations / Phonics Screening .

If unauthorised holiday leave is taken in term time and the child's is absent for more than 10 school sessions (5 days), the school will notify the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer who may issue a Penalty Notice. This may result in a fine being issued.

6. Extended leave of absence

St Michael's Primary School will not normally authorise extended family visits overseas as these visits can take place during the school holidays. However, it is mindful that families may need to

- visit seriously ill family members
- attend a family wedding or funeral
- participate in an act of religious observance (e.g. Hajj)

In such circumstances the leave would be authorised for the date of the event / act of religious observance

7. Parents' / carers' responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by St Michael's Primary School.

St Michael's Primary School expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents will also be expected to:

- notify St Michael's Primary School on the first day of absence by telephone or in person at the school office;
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, supporting with homework and writing in Home-School Diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. St Michael's Primary School will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns following the procedures set out in our Compliments and Complaints Policy.

8. Pupils' responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to a trusted adult in school. For pupils of Primary School age, the main responsibility for attendance rests with the parents.

Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school, and their parents have not telephoned the school, they should give their class teacher a note from their parents to explain the absence.

9. Governors' responsibilities

The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

10. Conclusion

Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring successful outcomes for pupils –

being healthy:

- attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy

staying safe :

- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly

enjoying and achieving:

- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings

making a positive contribution:

- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others

achieve economic well-being:

- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style

Inclusion

Our school is an inclusive school. We aim to make all pupils feel included in all our activities. We try to make all our teaching fully inclusive. We recognise the entitlement of all pupils to a balanced, broadly-based curriculum. We have systems in place for early identification of barriers to their learning and participation so that they can engage in school activities with all other pupils. We acknowledge the need for high expectations and suitable targets for all children.

Appendix 1

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at **8.50am** and the afternoon register at **1.10pm**.

2. What happens if my child is late?

Registration finishes at **9.00am** in the morning and **1.20pm** in the afternoon.

If your child arrives after **9.00am** he/she will be marked as **absent** (unless a good reason for lateness is provided, in which case the mark will be changed to **late**).

The vast majority of pupils in a primary school remain on the site at lunchtime but, if your child comes home for lunch and arrives back at school after **1.10pm** he/she will be marked as **late after the register closes**.

If your child arrives after **1.20pm** he/she will be marked **absent** (unless a good reason for lateness is provided, in which case the mark will be changed to **late**).

[Pupils who arrive after registration should report to the school office to sign in with the office staff who will adjust the class register as necessary. A pupil who has 10 unauthorised late marks (not necessarily consecutive) over a period of 12 school weeks (excluding school holidays) may receive a penalty warning notice and a fine.]

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence. Parents can leave a message on the answering machine indicating the reasons and likely length of the absence. If you do not phone us, we will phone you. If telephone contact is not made, a letter explaining the absence on the first day of return to school will be required otherwise the absence will be unauthorised.

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- *Emergency* dental/medical appointment
(Please make routine appointments after school or during the Holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

5. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping or birthdays etc. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised (a holiday request form must be completed well in advance).

6. Will the school contact me if my child is absent?

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

7. I am thinking about sending my child on an extended absence for an overseas to visit relatives. What should I do?

St Michael's Primary School will not normally authorise extended family visits overseas as these visits can take place during the school holidays. However, it is mindful that families may need to

- visit seriously ill family members
- attend a family wedding or funeral
- participate in an act of religious observance (e.g. Hajj)

In such circumstances the leave would be authorised for the date of the event / act of religious observance

8. What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. Your child will bring home a Home-School Diary each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and support them with their reading or homework as necessary.

9. My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher, or Key Stage Leader, immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer. The school may also refer you to an Education Welfare Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise.

OFFICE USE ONLY
HEAD TEACHER
SIMS REGISTER
TEXT RESPONSE SENT

PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Full Name of children: 1. _____ Class _____

2. _____ Class _____

3. _____ Class _____

I intend to take my child/children out of school on the following dates. I understand that the absence of my child/children will be recorded as 'unauthorised' on the school's register and this will reflect in their overall attendance record.

Head Teachers have a discretionary power to refuse requests if your child already has a poor record of attendance or if national tests are taking place at the time of the holiday/absence.

Period 1
Start date: _____ End Date: _____ TOTAL DAYS: _____

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Please indicate the reason for your child's absence. If this is for a holiday, please indicate why this holiday could not take place in the course of the normal school holiday pattern (please see the attached Guide for Parents before writing your reasons).

Absence for Medical Reasons (please complete the box below).

Signature of Parent _____ Date _____

Print Name _____

TERM-TIME HOLIDAYS – A Guide for Parents

Term Time Absence

Term-time holidays are discouraged and should only be planned in exceptional circumstances. In these situations

St Michael's Primary School will consider each application individually; its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended holiday.

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- *An application has been made **in advance** by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides AND*
- *The Head teacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.*

St Michael's Primary School **will consider** authorising holidays for (exceptional circumstances):

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- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

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- cheaper cost of holiday;
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St Michael's Primary School will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests ie: SATs examinations / Phonics Screening.

If unauthorised holiday leave is taken in term time and the child's is absent for more than 10 school sessions (5 days) the school will notify the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer who may issue a Penalty Notice. *This may result in a fine being issued.*

Extended Leave of Absence

In considering absence for extended trips overseas St Michael's Primary School will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved.
- Where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.