

## St Mary's CofE Primary School

### Attendance Policy

#### **Ethos Statement**

In accordance with the aims of the school, the Governing Body of St Mary's believe that all members of the school community should be esteemed, cared for, treated courteously and encouraged to make their unique contribution. Within our Christian ethos of love, forgiveness and justice for each person as a valued child of God, we aim to develop understanding and respect for each other's faith, culture and language, and to teach, exemplify and uphold equal opportunities for all.

#### **1) Introduction**

- 1.1) The Staff and Governing Body at St. Mary's CofE Primary School give a high priority to its pupils' educational achievement and believe that maximum pupil attendance and punctuality are essential in order for all children 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 to ensure that it is effectively and appropriately implemented.
- 1.2) Whole school attendance targets are set annually in consultation with the Governing Body and the school monitors these closely throughout the year.

#### **2) Background and Principles**

- 2.1) There are strong and proven links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. Attendance of less than 95% (i.e. absences of 9.5 days or more out of the 190 pupil days in the school year) has been shown to compromise pupil attainment. **At 90% attendance pupils miss the equivalent of almost 4 weeks education (19 days) and only 10% of pupils who are persistently absent from school achieve 5 A-C grades at GCSE.**
- 2.2) Taking holidays during term-time, which was once the exception for parents/carers with inflexible annual leave allocation, has increasingly become the norm as families take holidays (sometimes multiple holidays) during term times in order to take advantage of cheaper prices.
- 2.3) Time off school for holidays is not a right. The Head Teacher can allow up to 10 days consecutive absence in exceptional circumstances such as:
  - for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education; and
  - when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.
- 2.4) Greater flexibility in the allocation of annual leave by employers and the introduction of statutory minimum periods of paid annual leave has now reduced the need for families to take holidays during term time.
- 2.5) The school acknowledges that extended visits to the country of family origin provide important opportunities to reaffirm family, linguistic and cultural identities and recognises that these can be positive personal and educational experiences. **However there is strong evidence to indicate that where such visits result in significant absence from school during term time, the disruption to the child's education can have a negative impact on his/her educational attainment.**
- 2.6) Consequently, planned absences during term-time holidays are not allowed without prior authorisation from the Head Teacher and parents/carers are therefore discouraged from arranging holidays, either in the UK or abroad, or visits to their country of family origin, during term-time.
- 2.7) Information for parents/carers which clarifies their legal responsibilities regarding attendance and highlights the impact of absences during term-time will be made available each year to all parents/carers through, as part of parent evenings, in the school's prospectus and through new parent and pupil induction.

### 3) Holidays requests/ Term time absence

- 3.1) St. Mary's CofE Primary School operates a formal application process for parents/carers wishing to take their child/children out of school during term times. An application should be made to the Head Teacher on a form obtained from the school office, at least six weeks or half a term in advance. The application does not, in itself, guarantee that the request will be authorised.
- 3.2) As part of their application parent/carers will be expected to demonstrate a willingness to make arrangements that cause least disruption to their children's learning. This may involve:
- Wrapping days of absence around existing school holiday periods to minimise time out of school (but avoiding start of term, especially beginning of academic year, if possible)
  - Considering whether it is wholly appropriate for the child/children to accompany adults in some circumstances
  - Weighing the benefits to the family against detriment to the child's/children's educational progress and attainment
  - Avoiding periods where there are public examinations and National Curriculum assessments
  - Making arrangements to complete coursework or curriculum work if an extended period of absence is sought
- 3.3) The Head Teacher will consider each individual application using the relevant recommended guidance and:
- The pupil's current absence record
  - The number of previous similar requests
  - The year group the pupil is in
  - Proximity to major tests/exams
- 3.4) The Head Teacher will inform the parent/carer within 7 school days of receipt of the application whether or not the request has been authorised.
- 3.5) A home/school contract or agreement, stating the date of return, must be agreed and signed by the parent and Head Teacher (see appendix 6). The school and the parent(s) should retain a copy of the contract and any subsequent letters. This is particularly important if parents' later appeal following the loss of a school place.
- 3.5)1. **Failure to agree and/or return a home-school contract, or not return to school by the agreed date, places the pupil at risk of losing his/her school place.**
- 3.5)2. **The Head Teacher and Governing body are within their rights 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 pupil's educational progress and attainment and with due regard to their previous attendance record.
- 3.6) 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 penalty notice, being prosecuted in court and losing the child's place at the school.
- 3.7) The Head Teacher will record the number and frequency of absences taken during term time throughout each pupil's school career.

### 4) Absence in exceptional circumstances

- 4.1) The Head Teacher may, on rare occasions, make a judgement that there are genuine and exceptional circumstances pertaining to an application to take a pupil out of school during term. For example:
- Parent/carer required to take leave during factory or workplace closedown
  - Inflexible leave allocation in parent's profession
  - Parent/carer recuperation & convalescence from critical illness or surgery.
  - Death of parent or sibling
  - Life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling
- 4.2) Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interests of the child nor wholly appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members.

School and school friendships and relationships can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background to life during times of upheaval. However, where the Head Teacher judges there to be genuine and pressing reasons for a child to be absent during term-time, they may agree up to a **maximum of 10 consecutive days' absence in any one school year in exceptional circumstances.**

- 4.3) If leave is granted, then the family must supply evidence of any travel arrangements (if leaving the UK) and details of the address where the child will be during the period of absence.

**Granting such a block of leave will be an absolute exception.**

Therefore, leave requests of a maximum of 10 days in any academic year will not be authorised on an annual basis (please see 3.4). This includes requests based on bullet-point 2 in 4.1 above.

- 4.4) Where a pupil has been granted additional days leave and does not return to school on the agreed date a further period of 10 days is allowed to enable investigation by the school and Education Welfare Service into the whereabouts of the pupil, before de-registration is considered.

**5) Procedures for Lateness**

- 5.1) Pupils arriving after 9am must report to school office to be signed in.
- 5.2) Pupils will be marked as late - (L mark on register) with the number of minutes late recorded together with the reason. Any child arriving after 9.20am without a medical reason or explanation from parents will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for that session.
- 5.3) Parents must sign out children who have to leave during the school day. School administrative staff will witness this.

**6) Strategies for maximising attendance**

- 6.1) Weekly Class Attendance certificates for the class with the highest percentage attendance for that week.
- 6.2) Attendance and punctuality will be promoted through assemblies and newsletters.
- 6.3) The school will review absence patterns for each child and will determine the course of action to be followed where there are emerging concerns, this is typically when attendance falls below 95% over a prolonged period of time. This could include a letter to parents; a request for a meeting; a referral to the school's family support worker; further monitoring for a specific period time or a combination of some or all of these strategies.
- 6.4) If a child's attendance level drops below 90%, the school will commence close monitoring of that child's attendance level and the Head Teacher will write to the parents. The school may consult with the Birmingham Local Authority Attendance Unit to take further advice.
- 6.5) If a child's punctuality rate drops below 90%, the school may consult with the Birmingham Local Authority Attendance Unit to take further advice.
- 6.6) The school will utilise Birmingham Local Authority's 'Fast-track to Attendance' legal procedure for dealing with issues of persistent absence should the specified threshold for action be reached.

**7) Summary of Responsibilities**

**7.1) Parents will:**

- Consider whether it is wholly appropriate for the child/children to accompany adults in some circumstances
- Weigh the benefits to the family of term time absences against detriment to the child's/children's educational progress and attainment
- Avoid requesting term time absences during periods where there are public examinations and National Curriculum assessments

- Make arrangements to complete curriculum work if an extended period of absence is sought.
- Attempt to ensure their child attends school regularly in accordance with the signed whole school agreement.
- Notify the school by phone/letter by 9am on the first day of any absence (e.g. sickness/ family emergency).
- Send a letter stating the reasons for and duration of all unauthorised absence upon the child's return

7.2) **The Senior Leadership Team will:**

- Monitor attendance and, where concerns are identified, communicate these with parents/outside agencies to agree actions to address identified issues.
- Inform governors of attendance data through the termly Headteacher Safeguarding report.
- Inform parents of attendance percentages for their pupil/s at the end of the school year.
- Promote and reward excellent attendance by pupils.
- Authorise the use of Birmingham LA's 'Fast Track' legal procedure for dealing with cases of Persistent Absence (Headteacher only).

7.3) **Class Teachers will:**

- Ensure that registers are taken at the start of each session.
- Report any concerns relating to attendance to the school attendance team.

7.4) **The School Attendance Team will:**

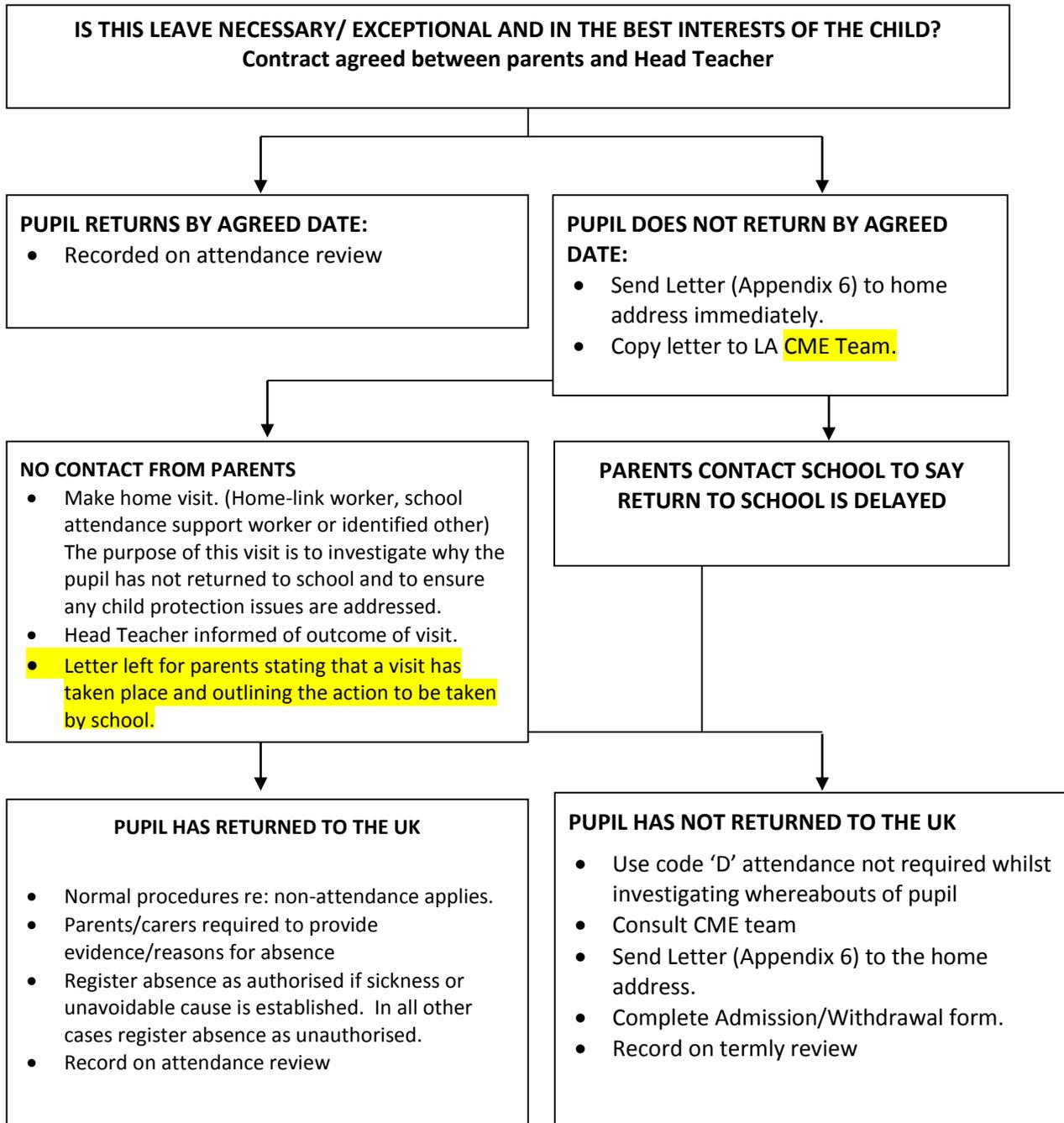
- Input attendance data on a daily basis
- Analyse attendance data and identify levels and patterns of absence and lateness which are of concern.
- Compose letters to parents in line with Birmingham Local Authority advice and procedures.

7.6) **The Governing Body will:**

- Annually review the school's Attendance policy.
- Challenge the school's leadership on issues of attendance.

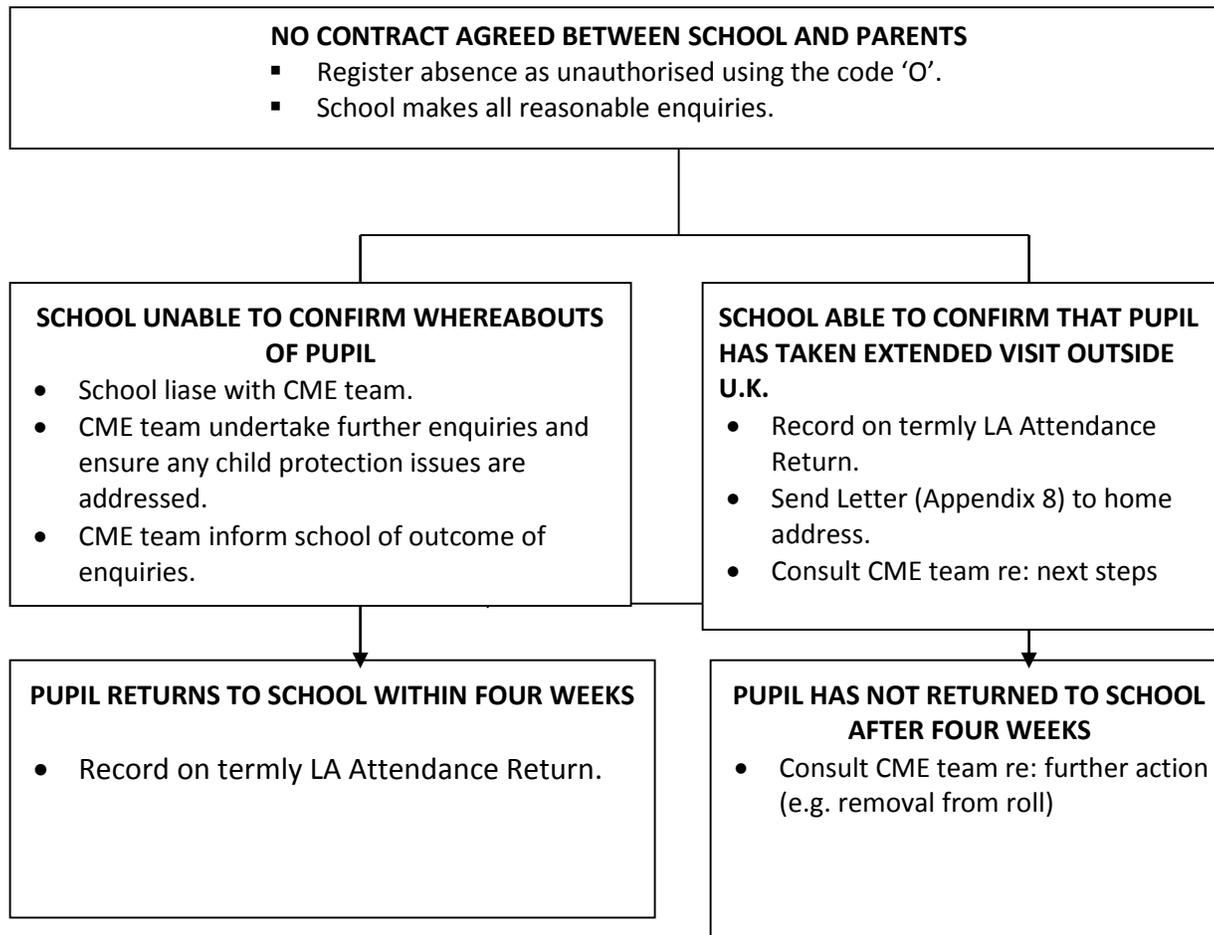
**Appendix 1**

**Procedure for Authorised Absence During Term-time**



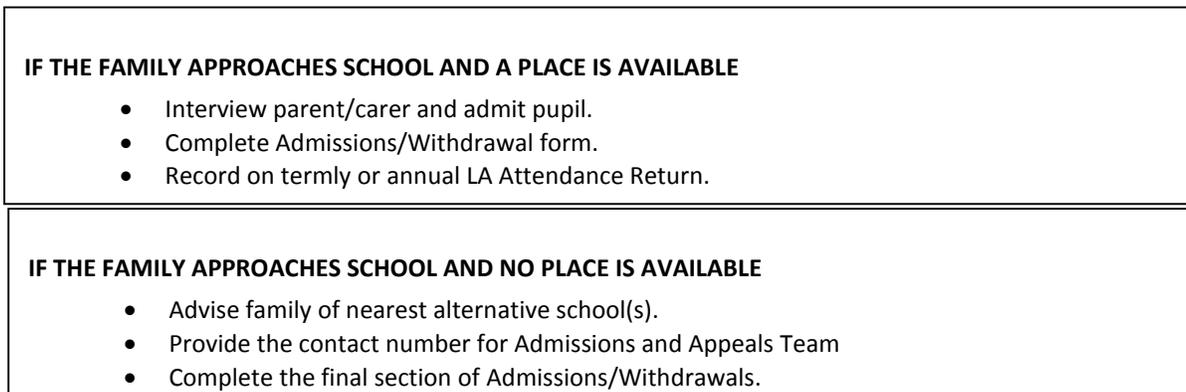
## Appendix 2

### Procedure for Unauthorised Absence during term-time



## Appendix 3

### Admission procedures for pupils returning to UK without a school place.



**PLEASE NOTE: IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE LA IS NOTIFIED OF ANY CHILD IN THE AUTHORITY WITHOUT A SCHOOL PLACE.**



**HOME SCHOOL CONTRACT  
FOR PUPIL ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME**

**THIS CONTRACT IS AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN**

The parents/carers of .....and the school.

We have agreed that ..... will be absent from school

from (date).....to (date).....

The absence needs to take place at this time because .....

.....

He/she will return to school on or before .....

It is understood that if he/she does not return by the agreed date that (a) the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each absent child and (b) there may no longer be a place for him/her at the school and he/she is likely to be removed from the school register, in accordance with the Birmingham City Council Children, Young People and families Directorate on Extended Absence.

Failure to agree and/or return the Home School Agreement or not returning by the agreed date places your child at risk of losing his/her school place.

**Parent's/Guardian's signature:** .....

**Head teacher's signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

**PLEASE ENSURE THIS CONTRACT IS NOW RETURNED TO SCHOOL.**

**Appendix 5**

**Letter where the request from parents/carers has been considered but not granted**

Dear

I am unable to grant your request for your child/children ..... to be absent from school during term time.

I assure you that I have made this decision with the best interests of your child in mind. I will not authorise this absence.

The importance of school attendance is such that leave of this kind will only be granted where the circumstances are exceptional. This is in line with Birmingham Local Authority's policy on absence during term time.

Birmingham Education Welfare Service requires the school to inform them of any unauthorised absences from school and they will take appropriate action, which may include issuing Penalty Notices to Parents/Carers, or instigating Court Action.

It is essential at this point for your child/children to be in school regularly to benefit fully from their educational opportunity. Continuity of attendance underpins academic achievement as well as social and emotional development. We are sure you would not wish to jeopardise your child's current academic progress by taking them away at this time.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

**Appendix 6**

**Letter: Where a period of absence has been granted and the child has not returned by the agreed date**

Dear:

Your child ..... has now been absent from school for .....school days. You agreed that your child would return to school on .....

As this date has now passed and your child has not returned, I need to let you know that if your child has not returned to school before.....

(i.e. 10 days after the agreed return date), the school will need to consider further action against you.

This is in line with the Birmingham City Council Children, Young People and Families Directorate Policy on Extended Absence.

Please contact me as soon as you return.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

**Appendix 6:**

**Letter: Where a period of absence has not been granted**

Dear

It is our understanding that your child ..... is absent from school in order to make an extended visit abroad. This absence has not been authorised and no home/school contract has been agreed.

In line with the Birmingham City Council Children, Young People and Families Directorate Policy on Extended Absence, unless your child has returned to school by .....(i.e. 4 weeks after the date of first absence) the school must consider taking further action against you. Please contact me as soon as you return.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher