

# **Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy**



***Learn to Love; Learn to Believe; Learn to Achieve.***

*In our school Christ is at the centre and children  
are at the heart of all that we do:*

*We inspire everyone to succeed to reach their potential  
in a safe inclusive happy environment;*

*We develop resilient hard working independent individuals  
who are confident to take risks.*

## **Attendance & Punctuality Policy**

**Date: 24 May 2024**

**Review Date: 23 May 2025**

**Signed by Chair of Governors: Mrs S Buller**

## **Introduction**

Providing an appropriate, full time education is an essential element of enabling a child to achieve their academic potential.

Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy believes that regular and punctual attendance is the key to empowering its children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Through regular and punctual attendance pupils will participate in activities that aid them in becoming emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy values all pupils equally and will work with families to identify any reasons for unsatisfactory attendance. Achieving a high level of punctual attendance is a matter for the whole school community and it is recognised that the best outcomes will be achieved by home and school working collaboratively to resolve any personal barriers in a pro-active and encouraging manner.

This policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

School attendance is subject to Education Laws and this policy is set within the legal context.

## **Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday and ceases to be so on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, states that if a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly, his parent is guilty of an offence.

At this school regular and punctual attendance means being in school and on time every day of each term unless there is unavoidable cause to be absent. We strive for every pupil to achieve 100% with no late arrivals.

The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for a child of compulsory school age and where necessary may use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Absence from school should only occur when a child is unfit to attend due to illness, has a day of religious observance or has otherwise been given written authorisation from the Head teacher for a leave of absence.

## **Categorising absence**

When a registered pupil is recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the Head teacher or designated member of staff and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received. Parents must advise school by telephone or in person by 9:30am on each day of absence and provide an expected date of return, wherever possible. This should be followed up on the child's return with a written note and supporting medical evidence if appropriate.

### **Authorised absence due to illness**

Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence for extended absence (of 5 days or more) due to illness or repeated illness (3 separate occasions) during a half term (6-week period). For example, in the form of an appointment card, letter, named and dated prescription or prescribed medication

### **Authorised absence due to medical / dental appointment**

Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day where possible and parents must show the appointment card or letter to the school office.

### **Authorised absence due to exclusion (no alternative provision made)**

The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home and parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age are not permitted to visit public areas during a period of exclusion.

### **Authorised absence due to religious observance**

Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or

weekends. The Head teacher will authorise on receipt of a completed leave of absence form and agree how many days will be authorised. Parents are expected to provide advance notice if they intend their child to be absent for this reason.

In the interests of both supporting the academic potential of every pupil and limiting the authorised absence rate, no more than 3 days will be authorised for any child in any one school year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

### **Authorised absence of Traveller children**

It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, will attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school or academy
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

### **Authorised absence due to other circumstances**

This relates to occasions when there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances such as a family bereavement or short-term and agreed part-time timetable as part of a reintegration package or to support attendance. The Head teacher will use discretion in authorising such absence and expects parents to make and keep regular contact during any agreed periods of absence.

### **Leave of absence**

**The Department for Education and National Association of Head Teachers advise schools cannot authorise absence for the sole purpose of family holidays.** However, authorisation for a leave of absence may be given in 'exceptional circumstances' to a maximum of 10 days. Exceptional circumstances are at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must complete a written request form to the Head Teacher available from the school reception or from the school website. This form must be completed in full to be given consideration. At least one month

in advance of the first day of requested leave. Parents are advised not to make any travel arrangements or bookings prior to receiving authorisation.

All fully completed requests for leave of absence will be considered on individual merit and responded to in writing outlining the conditions of any leave granted. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised – see Code G – unauthorised leave of absence.

If a pupil fails to return to school on an agreed date and contact with the parents has not been made or received, a home visit will be made and school may take the pupil off roll in compliance with both national pupil registration legislation and the Local Authorities Children Missing Education protocols. This means that the child may lose their place at this school.

If a leave of absence is recorded without prior written permission this will be recorded as unauthorised. In such cases the school may request the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrate's court.

### **Unauthorised absence due to no satisfactory reason being provided**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted by the Head teacher. If a parent/ Carer fails to contact the school or provide a satisfactory reason on each day of absence this will be marked as unauthorised within the register and a home visit may be made.

### **Late arrival and arrival after close of registers**

The register is taken twice a day. Once at the beginning of the morning session and again at the start of the afternoon session. Each school day therefore counts as two attendances or sessions.

Parents are requested to make sure their child is on site by 8:45am where staff will be present welcome pupils and parents to school. The register is taken at 8.55am.

Pupils arriving after 8.55am must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. They will be marked as present but arriving late. Parents are expected to provide a reason for late arrival. A record of all late arrival will be monitored and appropriate action taken to support parents/ pupils to make the necessary improvements.

The Register will remain open for the recommended 30 minutes and will close at 9:30am prompt. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as taking unauthorised absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate for compulsory age pupils.

Absence from registration will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation can be provided. For example, attendance at a medical appointment or emergency.

## **Deletions from the Register**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy will follow the local authority's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **Attendance Roles & Responsibilities**

Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy believes that regular and punctual school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the pupils, parents, school staff and governors.

The Head of School leads on attendance and is supported by the named governor. The day to day management of pupil attendance is led by Mrs Rudd and Mrs Hall.

The SLT who are responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring attendance throughout the school. However, the school recognises the important role Class Teachers & all support staff have in promoting and monitoring good attendance and punctuality.

### **Pupils**

All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually. Pupils who experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their class teacher, Pastoral Support staff and the Head Teacher. Pupils are rewarded for good attendance at the end term and at

the end of the academic year. Pupils with inconsistent and poor attendance will be set targets for improvements.

## **Parents/Carers**

Parents and carers have a very important part to play in supporting their children's education. In order to secure their child's regular and punctual attendance parents and carers are expected to:

- Talk to their child about school and take a positive interest in their child's progress
- Instil the value regular and punctual attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact school when their child is absent providing a reason and expected date of return
- Avoid unnecessary absences such as family holidays and wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Provide supporting medical evidence for absences whenever requested to do so by the school
- Engage with intervention strategies if their child's attendance and/or punctuality is highlighted as a cause for concern.

Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their child aged 5-16, if registered at a school, attends regularly and on-time. If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at the school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority's education welfare services. Education welfare services conduct all investigations in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984.

The local authority has the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a School Attendance Order (section 442 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school (section 444 1 & 1(a) of the Education Act 1996).

## **Governing Body & The Ralph Sherwin Multi Academy Trust**

The Governing Body supports school in promoting regular and punctual attendance by:

- Reviewing whole school and persistent absence data at termly meetings
- Undertaking an annual review of the impact of individual target setting

- Providing funds to enable the implementation and maintenance of a school reward system for good and improved attendance and punctuality
- Providing a named Governor to support school-based staff

Attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department for Education annually and to the Governing Body termly. All information shared is done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **The Senior Leadership Team**

The Leadership Team ensures there is a whole school approach to attendance and punctuality by:

- Disseminating the Attendance Policy to all staff
- Reviewing the policy annually and updating colleagues on amendments at staff meetings
- Ensuring the school has in place strategies for collecting and analysing data
- Promoting the importance of regular and punctual attendance to parents and pupils through whole school letters and other communications sent home
- Provide good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Creating a safe and structured learning environment for all pupils
- Monitoring the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensuring that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensuring that key staff are adequately trained to address attendance issues and have appropriate amounts of time to complete their duties
- Returning school attendance data to the board of governors, the academy trust, Local Authority and the Department for Education as required.
- Parents/carers will be informed promptly of any concerns that may arise over a child's attendance.
- At regular intervals the Head Teacher will write to parents/carers whose child's attendance is a cause for congratulation or raise concerns.

### **Administration and Pastoral Staff**

The Administration and Pastoral staff will support regular and punctual attendance by:

- Monitoring and analysing data
- Complying with all relevant attendance legislation in the daily monitoring registers, ensuring accurate, legal and up to date recording of marks
- Challenging late arrival and unauthorised absence (Appendix 3)
- Implementing agreed strategies for promoting regular and punctual attendance (Appendix 1)
- Implementing agreed strategies for tackling irregular attendance and/or unsatisfactory punctuality (Appendix 1)
- Providing class teachers with half termly data for all pupils in their class which highlights excellent attendance, early concerns and pupils with persistent absence



- Disseminating termly data and trends to the Head teacher and Senior Leadership Team

## **Legal Sanctions**

### **Prosecution**

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

### **Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003)**

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the Head teacher

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Derbyshire County Council's Penalty Notice Protocol. Please refer to Local Authority Advice and Guidance for parents available on the Academy's website.

## **School attendance target**

Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy maintains an aspirational target of 100% for school attendance and strives to achieve this at all times. Where individual pupil attendance is identified as a cause for concern specific targets for improvement will be set and monitored in partnership with the pupil and family.

# APPENDIX I

## Strategies for promoting regular and punctual attendance

- Regularly updating the whole school community about attendance matters and procedures through newsletters and other media
- Celebrating the achievement of the highest performing pupils
- Displaying individual and class achievements via the website and prominent display board
- Encouraging improvement through class competitions, certificates and extra-curricular activities
- Regular staff meetings and sharing of data with teachers, senior leaders and governors

## Strategies for tackling irregular attendance and/or unsatisfactory punctuality

- First day calling procedures
- Reason for absence letters and reply slips
- Standardised and escalating series of school letters
- Home visits
- Late gate initiative
- Text messaging, phone calls and/or home visits
- Mentoring of identified pupils
- Friendship groups
- PHSE
- Referral to school nurse
- Caseworking of identified families - action plan meetings and Parenting Contracts\*
- Referral to other agencies and /or the Local Authority for targeted support (Early Help Assessment)\*\*
- Issuing of Penalty Notices
- Documenting interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated and referring to the Local Authority for legal action

This list is not exhaustive and the underlying principle of any support offered to families will be a child centred focus, planned and reviewed in agreement with both parents and pupils.

\*Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) - A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

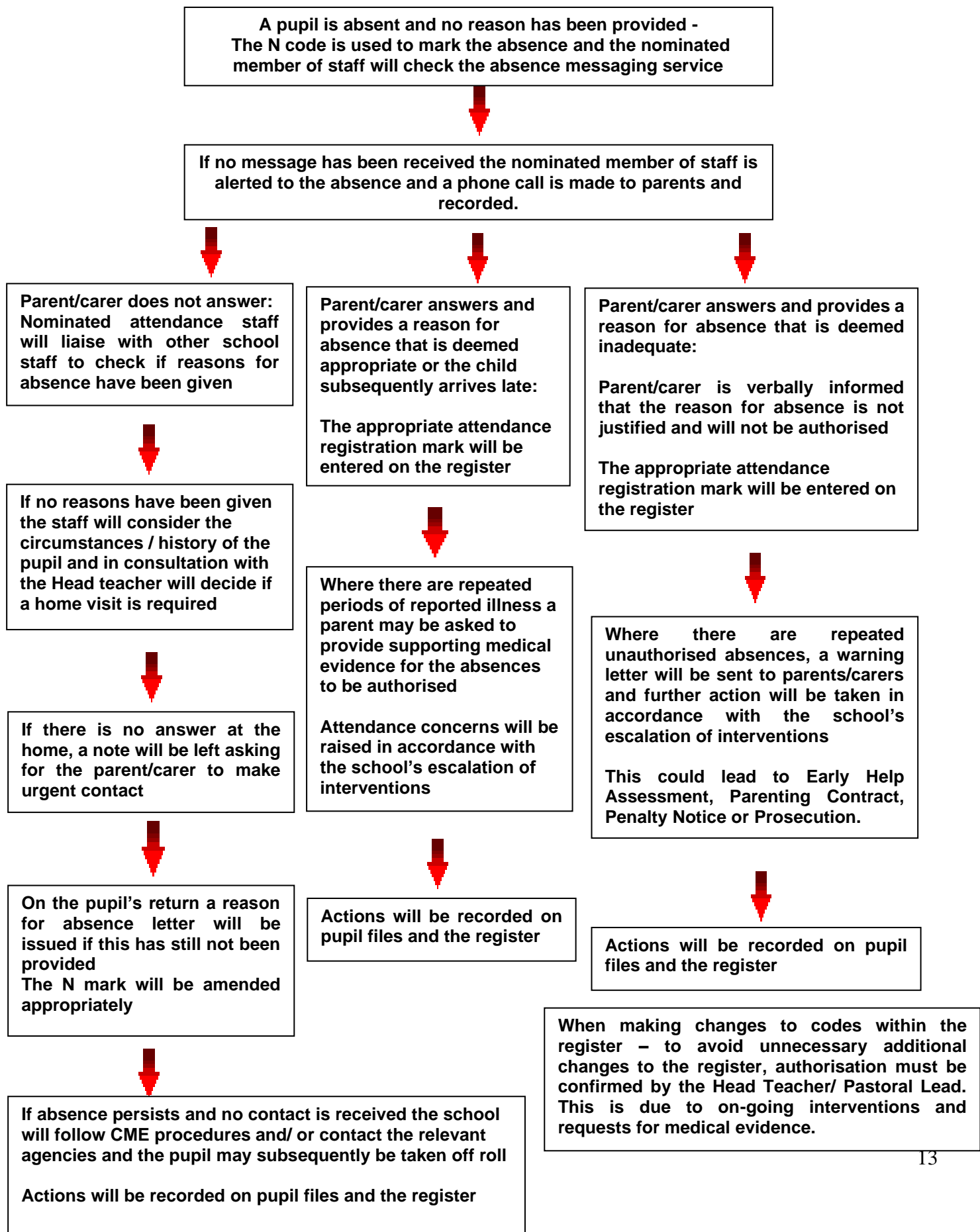
The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Derbyshire County Council's Parenting Contract Protocol and can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

**\*\*Early Help Assessment or EHA's are used to coordinate support as part of an agreed plan which builds on a family's strengths and requires a readiness to change so that support is offered at the right time.**

## APPENDIX 2

### Absence Procedure



## **APPENDIX 3**

### **ESCALATION OF INTERVENTIONS**

Whole school attendance is monitored by the administration and pastoral staff. Teachers, senior leaders and governors are regularly informed of progress. All pupils' attendance will be categorised in to a colour band as set out below and all parents will receive termly notification of which band their child is in:

#### **GOLD 100%**

School expects every child to attend on time every day. A child should only be absent if there is an unavoidable cause such as illness.

Pupils with 100% for a term will be rewarded in a celebration assembly

Pupils with 100% for the school year will be rewarded with certificates

Weekly class competition will be used to highlight the best performing classes, which will be displayed within the school.

#### **GREEN 99% – 96%**

There is a strong link between attendance and attainment. Every effort must be made to avoid absences although it is recognised that on occasion a child may be unavoidably unable to attend.

Pupils with improving attendance may receive a certificate and pupils with Green band attendance and no unauthorised absences will be given verbal praise whilst being encouraged to strive for 100% in the future.

School will implement its daily absence procedures as required (Appendix 2) and parents will receive escalating letters to notify them of any concerns (stage 1-4 Letters)

#### **AMBER 95% - 93%**

All absence is a cause for concern as your child is missing out on learning opportunities that may impact upon their educational development. Attendance below 95% will trigger support and guidance being offered to families. Parents must engage with school to find solutions and/or ensure their child's learning is best supported.

School staff will start to initiate interventions such as the class teacher will speak to the child about any concerns they have, a letter will be sent to parents highlighting attendance concerns (Stage 1 Letter).

If attendance continues to decline Parents may be asked to attend a meeting in school to draw up a support plan or targeted action plan and senior leaders will be made aware of concerns (Stage 2 Letter)

It would be expected that medical evidence be provided for any prolonged (5 or more days) or repeated illness (3 times in any half term) and unauthorised absences may lead to a penalty notice or prosecution.

School will implement its daily absence procedures as required and parents will receive escalating letters to notify them of concerns. If a pupil records 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence his/her parents will be issued with a statutory warning notice (Stage 3 letter) and attendance will be monitored for 15 days before being referred to the local authority if further unauthorised absence is accrued (Stage 4 letter)

### **RED 92% and Below**

Pupils who have attendance below 90% are considered to be persistently absent by the Department for Education. School will implement daily absence procedures as required and parents will be asked to provide medical evidence in order for absences to be authorised.

To ensure that interventions are focused and meet the needs of individuals, pupils will be grouped in to one of the following categories:

- Looked After Children and Children on the Child Protection Register
- Special Educational Needs
- School age parents/expectant parents
- Long term non-attendance
- Parental support/needs eg. parental drug use, young carers, domestic violence
- School issues eg. bullying, poor teacher/pupil relationship, curriculum issues
- Offended or have an Anti-Social Behaviour Order
- English as an Additional Language
- Ethnic minority
- Mid-year Admissions
- Gifted and Talented
- Other

In addition, where previous interventions have already been implemented and have had unsatisfactory impact, the parent will be invited to an Attendance Panel where the possible outcomes will be:

- Parenting Contract
- Completion of an EHA leading to multi agency support
- Referral to the Local Authority to initiate legal proceedings

Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without providing a satisfactory reason, a home visit will be carried out prior to referral to the Local Authority (Stage 4 letter)

## **Punctuality**

Children arriving late to school often miss important parts of teaching and learning within the school. This can have a long-lasting impact on pupils.

A record is kept of all children who arrive late after the start of the day and reasons for late arrival are logged and monitored closely to ensure that the correct support can be offered.

If a child is late 3 times in one week a letter is sent home to parents/ carers to highlight this concern and its effects.

Where late arrival persists, parents/ carers may be invited to meet with the Head Teacher to discuss how Saint Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy may provide support.

If a child is late after the close of the register (U code) and this continues despite support and interventions being offered and implemented, a referral may be made to Derbyshire County Council to consider legal action including statutory warning notices, penalty notices and prosecutions in the Magistrates court (Stage 3 & 4 Letter)

Attendance & Punctuality will be a standing item on the agenda of the Senior Leadership Team meetings & Governors meetings where the progress of vulnerable pupils will be reported and the effectiveness of interventions measured. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies, policy and procedures.