

Attendance Matters



Every Day Counts....

Information for Families

Penalty notice fines for school attendance and other useful attendance information

You may be aware that the government has made some changes to the penalty notices for unauthorised absence rules, which came into effect from 19th August 2024, in time for the new school year. We wanted to let you know about these changes as well as provide clarity around school expectations regarding attendance.

St Mary's Approach to Leave of Absence Requests

St Mary's approach to leave of absence requests will stay the same- we will not authorise any leave of absence in term time, unless satisfied that the reason is exceptional. We ask families to request permission in advance, and only if necessary.

Any requests should be put in writing via the Absence Request Form (available from the school office) and wherever possible with at least four weeks' notice.

To assist families in avoiding booking holidays and arranging other events during term time, our term date information is as follows:

2024-25 Term Dates.			
Dates for future years can be found by searching ' south glos term dates ' online.			
Term	First day of term	Last day of term	Inset Dates
1	Tuesday 3 rd September	Friday 25 th October	Monday 2 nd September
2	Monday 4 th November	Friday 20 th December	Monday 2 nd December
3	Monday 6 th January	Friday 14 th February	
4	Monday 24 th February	Friday 4 th April	Friday 21 st March
5	Tuesday 22 nd April	Friday 23 rd May	
6	Monday 2 nd June	Tuesday 22 nd July	Monday 21 st July Tuesday 22 nd July

What's changing?

From 19th August 2024, if a child has 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence for any reason within a rolling 10 week school period, their parent/carer(s) may receive a penalty notice. A session is one morning or afternoon.

Penalty Notices can also be issued for other unauthorised absence when a pupils absence reaches the National Threshold for considering a penalty notice (10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 weeks) Other unauthorised absence might include absence for birthdays or other family events which school have not deemed as an 'exceptional circumstance' and therefore cannot authorise. With the exception of unauthorised holidays in term time, before requesting a Penalty Notice, school must issue a 'Notice to Improve' letter to a parent and this will be a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve their child's attendance before a Penalty Notice is issued by the Local Authority.

Please note: Penalty notices are issued to parents and carers as an alternative to prosecution and are intended to prevent the need for court action. A penalty notice may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate cause of action. The decision to prosecute rests with the Local Authority and will only be used as a last resort when a parent fails to engage in the support that has been offered by school and the Education Welfare Team with the aim of improving pupil attendance. If a pupil fails to attend regularly at school, their parents may be guilty of this offence, leading to prosecution.

Sanction	Outcome
First penalty notice (in a 3-year rolling period)	The penalty is £80 (per parent/carer, per child) payable within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, the parent/carer may be prosecuted for the child's unauthorised absence.
Second penalty notice (in a 3-year rolling period)	The second time a penalty notice is issued to the same parent/ carer for the same child the amount will be £160 per parent/carer, per child (if paid within 21 days). There is no reduction for early payment. Again, if the fine is not paid, the parent/carer may be prosecuted.
Prosecution	Fines per parent/carer will be capped to two fines within a 3-year period. Once this limit has been reached, a prosecution will be considered. Prosecution may result in fines up to £2,500 per parent/carer, per child.

Arriving in school on time



Arriving at school on time is essential for your child's own learning, it encourages habits of good timekeeping and prevents any classroom disruptions. Late arrival means learners risk missing important information, which can disadvantage them.

Pupils can arrive between 8:40 and 8:50am. If they are booked into breakfast club, they can arrive from 7:45am.

Pupils are expected to be in class for registration at 8:50am.

If a child arrives after 8:50am they must enter the school via the office to be registered.

School may ask to meet with parent/carers of pupils who arrive late on a regular basis, to discuss reasons for lateness and plan for solutions.

Illness

Pupils should attend school every day that the school is open, unless they are not well enough.

Minor illnesses should not be a reason for staying at home. If your child attends school when feeling 'under the weather', be sure to let a member of staff know so that we can monitor them and contact you if we think they need to go home. If you are not sure whether to send your child into school, please contact the office, and we will be happy to talk this through with you.

If your child is too ill to attend, you must contact the school office before 9am on the first day of absence. If your child is ill for more than one day, you will need to contact the office on each morning of the absence, unless otherwise agreed.

It is important that you clearly explain any symptoms your child has and when the symptoms started.

By law, schools must record all pupil absences and whether the absence has been authorised or is unauthorised.

Medical & Dental Appointments

We ask that families try to avoid making appointments during school time. If this is unavoidable, please make appointments so that the minimum amount of school time is lost. Unless it is an emergency appointment, parent/carers are expected to complete the Absence Request form in advance. Your child should still attend school for as much of the school day as possible.

Absence Follow Up

The school office will always follow up any pupil absence where the parent/carer has not made contact.

Where we have cause for concern about the reason for a child's absence from school, staff may seek more information or evidence from families. This may include making a home visit to check on the welfare of the child.

What happens when attendance becomes a concern?

In order for children to thrive academically and socially, it is important that they are in school every day that it is open. However in reality there may be reasons why pupil's attendance drops below 100%. In recognition of this, we aim for the school's average attendance to be 97%.

If a child's attendance falls below 95%, the school will start to monitor any absences. If attendance falls below 90%, school will be likely to invite parent/carer(s) into school for an Attendance Plan Meeting.

This is a supportive process aimed at finding solutions to improve attendance.



In addition to monitoring percentage absence, school will also speak to families if there is a concern regarding the number of 'broken weeks'. This is when a child make have sporadic days off school particularly if these days fall on Mondays or Fridays. Whilst it may seem as though the odd day off school is harmless, this absence can leave gaps in learning and begin to have a significant impact on academic progress and social connection. Regular days off can also result in children not valuing good attendance in school or the workplace in future years.

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding the information provided, or any other attendance related questions, please contact the school office.

We thank you for supporting your child to attend school every day and engage with their learning. This reflects the value that our families place on their children receiving a good education and their investment in their child's future.