



**St Ralph  
Sherwin**  
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

# ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

## St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

### 2023 - 2024

Date approved	September 2023	Approved by	St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy Local Governing Board
Review cycle	Annual	Signature	
Due for review by	Advent Term 2024	Name	John Nish

Version Control	Date	Key Revisions Included
1	October 2022	Fully revised policy in line with DfE guidance
2	September 2023	Updated Leave of Absence request form – Appendix 1

## OVERVIEW AND COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY

At St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, we feel that, if learners are to get the greatest benefit from their education in school, it is important that they have good attendance and arrive punctually. As learners grow and prepare for their next stages of education and employment they need to see good attendance and punctuality as important qualities that are valued by others and employers. We will do all that we can to encourage good attendance and punctuality. Where learners are not conforming to our high expectations for attendance and punctuality we will put into place effective strategies to bring about improvement.

Following the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education of and school attendance, the then Secretary of State for Education, Right Honourable Nadhim Zahawi, wrote to school leaders in November 2021 to ask them to *really focus on resettling our approach to attendance and make maximising school attendance a top priority.*

In May 2022 (effective from September 2022) the Department for Education (DfE) document **'Working together to improve school attendance'** reiterated that 'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.'

The following approaches have been identified as reducing absenteeism in schools:

- demonstrate a strong attendance ethos;
- have a clear policy on absence;
- have effective, non-bureaucratic systems for monitoring attendance;
- use attendance data and other information to improve school and pupil performance;
- promote the importance and legal requirements of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers;
- intervene early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern;
- have support systems in place for vulnerable pupils;
- reward and celebrate good and improved attendance; and
- make best use of additional support for pupils and parents with greatest need.

*Our aim is to demonstrate these approaches within our school for the benefit of children in our care. We believe that in order to achieve and progress, every child needs regular school attendance.*

## INTRODUCTION

By promoting regular attendance of all children of compulsory school age, education plays a key role in the development and safeguarding of every child. Irregular attendance can lead to under achievement, which can result in children being at risk and lead to patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Regular school attendance is vital to the wellbeing of children.

At St Mary's, we expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all

children. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school. The importance of children starting the school day promptly in the class line along with their classmates is a crucial element in creating an atmosphere that prepares the children for learning. At St Mary's we take punctuality seriously and encourage and promote the best standards.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To ensure that all learners attend school well.
2. To ensure that all learners are punctual.
3. To win the support of parents/carers in ensuring that their children attend school well and that they arrive on time.
4. To keep good records of attendance through the school registers and to take prompt action to follow up absences.
5. To investigate and act immediately where truancy is suspected or confirmed.
6. To work effectively with Stockport Local Authority and other agencies to follow up attendance issues promptly and efficiently.
7. To monitor closely pupils with attendance and punctuality issues and to work with parents and where appropriate other agencies to bring about improvement.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Staff, parents and carers must make attendance a high priority and express this to the children by reinforcing the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

**However, should your child have any issues linked to attendance, please do not hesitate to contact school so that we can work together to overcome any barriers to attendance.**

### **All teaching staff are expected to:**

- Complete accurate and prompt registers for all sessions.
- Liaise with parents and carers as appropriate and follow up poor attendance and punctuality.
- Liaise with school office staff and/or Headteacher regarding attendance and punctuality issues.
- Welcome back children who have been absent and support them wherever possible to catch up on missed learning.
- Actively encourage good attendance.

### **School office staff and/or the Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher are expected to:**

- Regularly check the registers for accuracy and unexplained absence.
- Work in conjunction with relevant support agencies.
- Work with parents/carers of children to address issues and take appropriate action where absence or punctuality is a cause for concern.
- Reward good attendance and punctuality as appropriate.
- Send out attendance and punctuality letters.
- Refer any attendance or punctuality issues or safeguarding/ child protection issues to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

- Follow up absences.
- Contact parents/carers of absent children on a daily basis.
- Monitor the absence of children and follow the Stockport LA's Staged Attendance Process.
- Meet with and refer to Education Welfare regularly to discuss individual and key groups of children.
- Monitor unauthorised absence including absence due to unauthorised holiday (G) and late to school after the register has closed (U) and refer these cases to Education Welfare, following the LA staged process.
- Analyse whole school attendance data, including by cohort, on a weekly basis and create appropriate action plans.
- Analyse the trends in whole school data and create appropriate action plans..
- Raise the profile of importance of good attendance and punctuality throughout the school.
- Monitor and review the Attendance Policy

**Education Welfare Service is expected to:**

- Respond to referrals.
- Attend and lead regular meetings e.g. Team Around the Child, Child Protection
- Complete and take a lead with EHA referrals for children with attendance related issues.
- Take a lead and appropriate action with children who do not attend school.
- Liaise with the Headteacher, Learning Mentor and school office staff.
- Support the school in maintaining high levels of attendance.
- Recommend legal action.

**Parents or carers are expected to:**

- Familiarise themselves with the school term time dates.
- Ensure that school has current details of contact numbers and changes of address.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Let the school know if their child is going to be late.
- Contact the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason for absence, on the first day of absence.
- Telephone the school to advise if the absence is continuing after the first day of absence.
- In the case of a lengthy absence, to keep the school well informed
- Provide a note indicating an appointment at the dentist, doctor or optician before the arranged appointment...unless it is an emergency.
- Try to avoid appointments during the school day.
- Actively promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Avoid taking holidays in school term time.
- Inform the school of the reason for absence. However, please be aware that absences can only be authorised by the school.
- Are aware that persistent absence will not be authorised without medical evidence.

## OVERVIEW OF ATTENDANCE DATA FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR

There are 190 School days in each typical school year.

0 days absence	= 190 days of education	= 100% attendance at school
10 days absence	= 180 days of education	= 95% attendance at school
19 days absence	= 171 days of education	= 90% attendance at school
29 days absence	= 161 days of education	= 85% attendance at school
38 days absence	= 152 days of education	= 80 % attendance at school
47 days absence	= 143 days of education	= 75% attendance at school

Those children with between 95% and 100% attendance have the best chance to succeed and to celebrate success.

Those children with between 85% and 90% attendance have less chance of celebrating success and makes it harder to make progress.

Those children with between 75% and 80% attendance make celebrating success very difficult.

Please note that an attendance of 90% over 11 years of schooling means more than ONE YEAR of school missed.

## ABSENCE REQUESTS INCLUDING HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

*There is no automatic entitlement in law to term time holiday. Leave of absence will not be granted for holidays in term time unless the headteacher and Chair of the Local Governing Board agree that an exceptional circumstance applies.*

1. Exceptional circumstances will be discussed with the Headteacher and Chair of the Local Governing Board and the decision made will be final.
2. Exceptional circumstances will only be considered if a child's attendance *is above 96% at the time of application and only if the extended absence does not bring them below this level.* Authorisation for exceptional circumstances will only be granted for up to 5 days in any one school year. If a child stays away for more than 10 sessions (5 days), this will be recorded as unauthorised and noted on the child's records and this will be shared with the Local Authority as and when appropriate.
3. Holiday requests should be made in writing to the Headteacher on the school leave of absence request form (appendix 1). This form is available from the school website or from the school office. The request should be made by the parent or carer with whom the child lives. This is the case even where it is another person who wishes to take the child out of school. Requests should be made at least 15 school days before the requested absence
4. Parents will receive a written decision. This will indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised (appendix 2).
5. If you choose to take your child out of school for a holiday (or any other similar activity) during term time, when the absence has not been authorised, the absences will be marked in the school register as unauthorised absences. Any term time holidays will be recorded with the Local authority.

Other absence requests based upon exceptional circumstances will also follow the process outlined above. The headteacher has discretion regarding point 2 above, where exceptional circumstances apply.

## **AUTHORISED ABSENCES INCLUDE:**

- Illness or medical reasons
- Self-isolation due to exposure to COVID-19
- Days of religious observance
- Bereavement
- School visits
- Approved educational examination e.g. music or dance
- Approved sporting activity
- Interviews
- Orthodontist visit
- Exceptional circumstance

**Routine medical (GP) and dental appointments should be arranged during holidays or outside the school day.** Where this is not possible, it is expected that pupils only miss part of the day and that an appointment card or letter is brought into the school office as evidence. If this evidence is not provided either prior to, or within three days of the appointment, the absence will not be authorised.

## **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES INCLUDE:**

Any activity that can be conducted outside of the school day, during school holidays or at weekends e.g. holidays in term time, shopping, visiting relatives, birthday treats, buying shoes, going for a haircut, parent/s who are unwell. These will not be considered as exceptional circumstances.

## **LATENESS**

School starts at 9:00am. The school door opens at 8.45am to allow parents flexibility when dropping off but a child is expected to be in school by 9:00am every day. Lateness is classed as any child arriving between 9:01am and 9.30am when registers close. If a child arrives after 9:00am they should sign in via the electronic system at the school office accompanied by a responsible adult. Children arriving after 9.30am will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) in the register.

## **PERSISTENT ABSENTEES**

A child who has an attendance figure of 85% or below is classed as a persistent absentee and will be referred to the EWO. We have a duty to report this to the Local Authority which may result in prosecution or Education penalty notices, if the situation cannot be resolved and improved.

For more details, please refer to the 'Attendance Procedures' section of this policy.

## STRATEGIES TO MANAGE ATTENDANCE

1. All staff will complete registers accurately for each session and will draw to the Headteacher's attention any absences that are cause for concern or suspicion.
2. Parents will be expected to telephone or notify the school if their child is absent or ill by 9:00am.
3. The school office will make telephone contact with the home when a child is absent, if the parents have not notified the school that their child is absent. This will be on the first day of absence, and for subsequent days unless a pupil has an illness that lasts several days. If the parent cannot be contacted, a member of staff will visit the home. **It is therefore, extremely important that you are available to provide a reason for your child's absence.**
4. Where a learner is developing a pattern of 'occasional' absences the parent/carer will be contacted by school to discuss the pattern of absences. Please see the attendance Procedures within this policy.
5. School may also write to parent/carers, expressing concerns, or invite parents/carers in to discuss their child's absences.
6. The school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Service if there are concerns about the level of a pupil's absence and no medical evidence can be provided to justify the absences. This may result in the issuing of an Education Penalty Notice.
7. Where necessary the school will work closely with Stockport Local Authority to take action against those unlawfully keeping learners from school. This may involve issuing penalty notices or prosecuting parents.
8. If a parent has concerns or issues that are affecting their child's attendance, then it is important that they discuss this with school, in order for school to be made aware and any necessary support given.
9. Parents must ensure that they provide accurate, up to date details of addresses and phone numbers (mobile and landline) of everyone who has parental responsibility and day to day care of each pupil so that school can make contact if a pupil is ill.

Please see appendix 3 for a summary of the absence procedure.

## STOCKPORT LOCAL AUTHORITY STAGED ATTENDANCE PROCESS

At St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Primary Academy, we follow the 'Stockport Local Authority Staged Attendance Process' which was introduced in September 2021. Guidance for this process states:

*This staged process... has been designed to support schools in managing cases where pupil attendance is a concern. It sets out steps for schools to follow in Stages 1 and 2, working with parents to improve attendance before starting a formal process involving the Education Welfare Service from Stage 3 onwards, which may lead to enforcement.*

*In many cases, improvement in attendance can be brought about by good communication and strong partnership working between parents and the school, identifying and addressing the barriers to attendance. Offering and involving early help services is also an integral part of this staged process in cases where more help is needed to address wider issues within a family that are contributing to irregular attendance.*

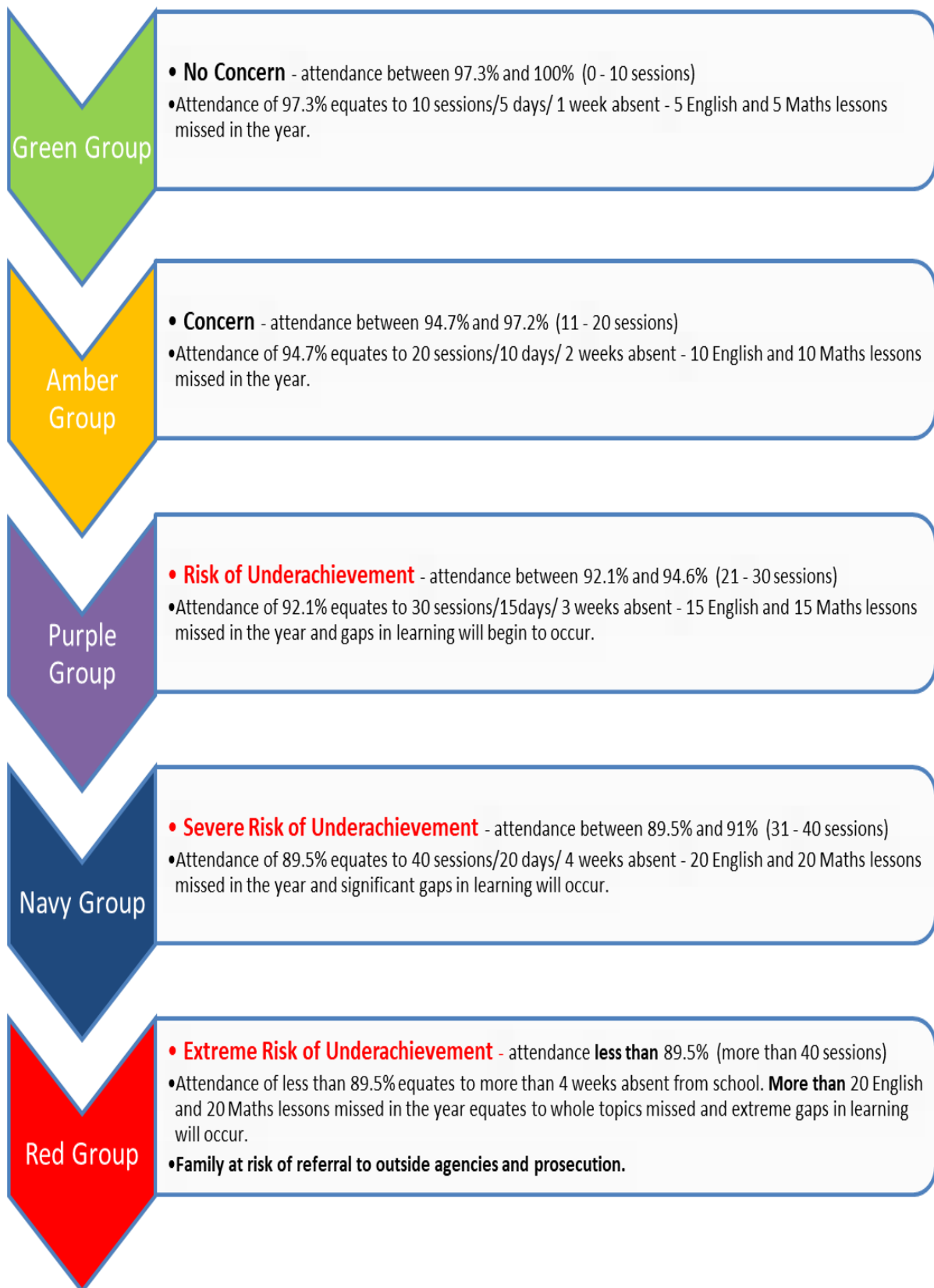
*The staged process has been introduced for the following reasons:*

- *To promote the role of the school and early help in supporting and addressing attendance issues, ensuring that families get the right support when they need it. Evidence from other local authorities suggests that this is more effective than punitive measures and is promoted by the DfE as being best practice in this area,*
- *To improve the quality of enforcement referrals and reduce the number that are rejected because schools have not done enough to identify causes of poor attendance, put support in place and involve appropriate services,*
- *To encourage a consistent approach to attendance, regardless of which school a child attends,*
- *To expedite the formal enforcement process leading to a quicker outcome once the Education Welfare Service is involved.*

This staged process has the following four stages and some explanation of each stage is provided overleaf:



**Chart to show the Attendance Monitoring Groups and related information regarding percentages and sessions**



## **STAGE 1: Attendance is a cause for concern (Amber Group)**

At this stage, St Mary's school staff will maintain regular contact with the parent/ carer to establish whether there is an underlying cause for the low attendance. This may include the following:

- Check if pupil has a SEND Support Plan/EHCP/access plan/behaviour plan or equivalent. Is this meeting the identified need? Are there any unidentified needs? ○ Talk to the class teacher about any possible in-school difficulties (relationships, academic pressures, changes in behaviour etc.) to identify any circumstances that could be impacting on attendance,
- Talk to the parent or pupil (if age appropriate) about anything that may be causing concern outside of school,
- Establish whether there are any medical needs,
- Provide the opportunity to catch up on any work missed through absences,

If, from these conversations, parents/ carers cite medical issues as the reason for absence, use will be made of a Medical Action Plan (if parents/ carers agree) and a meeting would be held, with the school nurse, in order to agree an appropriate plan of action.

If anxiety is identified as a contributory factor, school staff will support parents/ carers and signpost them to the appropriate external agencies to assist with this.

Where there are early indications that things are not going well for the family and support needs may go beyond what the school can offer, St Mary's will offer early help to families through completion of an Early Help Assessment (EHA). Where parents/ carers agree, an EHA should be completed and actions taken appropriate following the assessment. A referral to the Team Around the School (TAS) may also be appropriate, If the family already has an EHA in place, we shall collaborate with the lead professional to share concerns about attendance and ensure that the issues are named in the child's plan with clear actions for school to assist in supporting the plan. The same applies in cases where the pupil has a Social Worker,

The child's attendance will continue to be monitored closely and a range of supportive measures will be used to assist with improving their attendance.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- Attendance improved to satisfactory level = End staged process and monitor attendance.
- Attendance improving and agreed plan of support in place = Remain at Stage 1 for agreed period.
- Attendance not improving despite agreed plan of support in place, parents not sufficiently engaging with the plan or no engagement from parents in Stage 1 = **MOVE TO STAGE 2**

## **STAGE 2: School Attendance Meeting (Purple and Navy Groups)**

At this stage, parents would be invited, by letter, to a formal attendance meeting. Within this meeting, support would again be offered and a 4-6 week review period would be set.

### Next steps

At end of the agreed 4-6 week review period, we would conduct a review of the case to decide whether to start the formal process which may lead to enforcement. Advice would be sought from Education Welfare Officer (EWO) as to next steps.

- Significant improvement in attendance since School Attendance Meeting = review with parents either by meeting, phone or letter, then continue to monitor for an agreed period (staged process can then be ended if review period is successfully completed).
- Attendance improving and agreed plan of support in place = Remain at Stage 2 for an agreed period.
- Attendance not improving despite personalised plan, parents not sufficiently engaging with the plan or no engagement from parents in Stage 2 **AND**
- Pupil has had 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in the preceding 3-month period = **SCHOOL TO MAKE ENFORCEMENT REFERRAL TO THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE.**

## **STAGE 3: Formal Warning/ Parent Contract Meeting (Red Group)**

- This will be issued by the Education welfare officer and the child's attendance would continue to be monitored for a period of 15 days, which may lead to an Education Penalty Notice.
- At the end of the 15-day period, the Education Welfare Service will check attendance and determine whether or not to issue an EPN,
- In all cases, attendance will be monitored by the Education Welfare Service for a period of 3 months following the initial 15 day period,
- At the end of the 3 month period, if attendance still meets the threshold for enforcement, i.e. at least 10 unauthorised absences in 3 months, the case will be assessed for suitability for further enforcement, and moved to Stage 3(b) Parent Contract Meeting if appropriate, led by the Education Welfare Officer.
- Parent Contract meeting
- The meeting will be chaired by the EWO and will include a senior member of school staff. The meeting will discuss any absences since the School Attendance Meeting and review the plan and actions,
- Further plans will be put in place and actions agreed to support attendance, with all parties clear on what is expected of them and the timescale. This will be written up into a

- Parent Contract by the EWO and circulated to all parties. *(In some cases, the EWO may recommend remaining at Stage 2 or moving back to Stage 1 based on the information gathered at the Parent Contract Meeting),*
- A review meeting will be arranged for **4 weeks**.

At the end of the 4 week review period, the EWO will conduct a review of the case with the school:

- Improvement in attendance since Parent Contract Review Meeting with Parent Contract in place = Parent Contract to be closed with an agreed period of monitoring by the EWO.
- Attendance not improving, parents not sufficiently engaging with the plan or no engagement from parents in Stage 3 = Education Welfare Service will advise on whether a further review period is appropriate or whether the local authority will proceed to prosecution. Where the Education Welfare Service determine that prosecution is not in the public interest, advice will be given about how to proceed with the case.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- Whole school attendance data is produced and analysed weekly by V Major and J Nish
- Attendance Data is produced and monitored termly via the Headteacher's Termly Report to the Local Governing Board.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

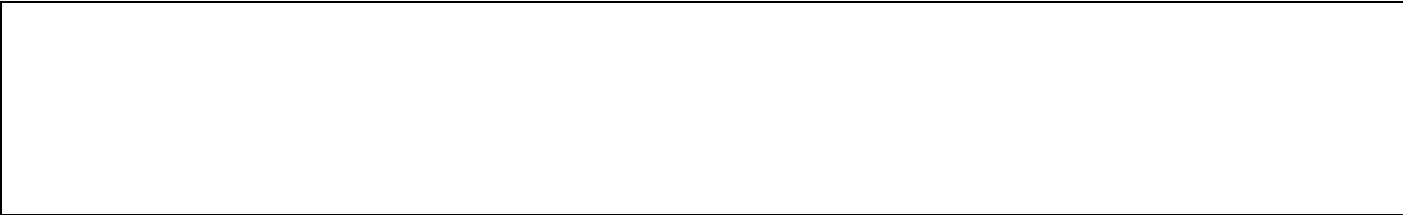
PLEASE NOTE - The **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013** state that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Please complete all sections		Year Group
Name of Child(ren)		
Child's Home Address		
Name of Applicant(s)		
Address (if different)		

I / We wish to apply for our child(ren) to be absent from school for **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** on the following dates.

From	
To	
Total number of days our child(ren) will be absent from school	

Please supply in as much detail as possible the reason for your request and why you feel it is **exceptional circumstances**. Please include the names of the adult(s) who will be with your child(ren) during their absence from school.



Signed (both parents if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
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**IF THE REQUEST IS FOR A FAMILY HOLIDAY PLEASE SUBMIT IT BEFORE THE HOLIDAY IS BOOKED**

The Department for Education have made amendments to the regulations with regard to school attendance. Previously, Headteachers were allowed to grant leave of absence during term time of up to 10 school days if the leave of absence application met the criteria set out by the Department for Education.

Since 1st September 2013, this has no longer been the case. Under new regulations, schools are no longer allowed to authorise leave of absence for family holidays. Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence for students during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any leave of absence taken without authorisation will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may be referred to SMBC Education Welfare Service.

A referral to SMC may result in a penalty notice being issued for each child and to each parent/carer of the child. Each Penalty Notice will be £60 if paid within the first 21 days which will increase to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in SMBC instigating legal proceedings against you for the offence of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.

Please note that if you have already been issued with a penalty notice during the academic year, this may mean that a further penalty notice will not be issued but a referral will be made to instigate a full prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

Is the pupil in a year group which involves a statutory assessment? \_\_\_\_\_

Percentage attendance on date form submitted \_\_\_\_%          Attendance Last Year \_\_\_\_%

Permission for absence is granted for \_\_\_\_ days.          Permission for absence is NOT granted for \_\_\_\_ days.

Reason(s) for permission not being granted: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed ..... Date .....

**APPENDIX 2 ST MARY’S CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY LEAVE OF ABSENCE  
RESPONSE LETTER**

Date

Dear Parent / Carer,

Pupil/s name/s: Year Group:

Application granted  Absence will be authorised		Application unauthorised  No further action taken in this instance		Application not granted  Absence will be unauthorised  Penalty will be requested	
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Date of leave: XXXXX

Date of agreed return: XXXXX

The Department for Education have made amendments to the regulations with regard to school attendance. Previously, Headteachers were allowed to grant leave of absence during term time of up to 10 school days if the leave of absence application met the criteria set out by the Department for Education.

Since 1st September 2013, this has no longer been the case. Under new regulations, schools are no longer allowed to authorise leave of absence for family holidays. Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence for students during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any leave of absence taken without authorisation will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may be referred to Derbyshire’s Education Welfare Service.

A referral to SMBC may result in a penalty notice being issued for each child and to each parent/carer of the child. Each Penalty Notice will be £60 if paid within the first 21 days which will increase to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in SMBC instigating legal proceedings against you for the offence of failing to ensure your child’s regular attendance at school.

Please note that if you have already been issued with a penalty notice during the academic year, this may mean that a further penalty notice will not be issued but a referral will be made to instigate a full prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

If you have any queries regarding the information in this letter please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Mr John Nish

Headteacher

### APPENDIX 3 ST MARY'S CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY ABSENCE PROCEDURE



**St Ralph  
Sherwin**  
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

