



ST MARY'S COLLEGE

3rd January 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

As we start the new term and a new calendar year, I write to you regarding the absolute importance of attendance. At St Mary's we pride ourselves on our outstanding attendance, and it is currently **significantly above** the local and national average.

If your child had a cumulative attendance last term of 97% attendance or above, you will have received a congratulatory letter from me before the Christmas holidays. Once again, I praise your child in attending school as much as possible.

97% attendance is the **minimum** attendance that we ask our students to strive for. Of course, there will be situations where it is not possible for a child to attend school at a minimum of 97% - for example ongoing health issues (both physical and mental) can affect a young person being able to achieve this. Please note that we understand this, and always aim to work with families to offer the appropriate and relevant support whilst making reasonable adjustments in order to help students with these ongoing serious conditions. We also note that there has been a nasty bout of flu and other viruses (not least Covid) which struck towards the end of last term and may have resulted in your child being too poorly to attend school which will have affected their attendance.

However, where possible, your child should attend school as much as he/she can. Missing just 1 school day results in 5 hours of learning lost forever. As the attached attendance information table shows: lower attendance results in lower GCSE outcomes, lower success in life and, not least, means young people not socialising and interacting with their peers as much as others.

St Mary's is a fantastic school with a world of opportunities for all of our students. We care very much about your child and love seeing them in school. Please support us in supporting you to ensure your child attends our school as much as they possibly can.

Should you wish to discuss your child's attendance please contact the year office. You can always check your child's attendance on the Edulink app.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs M Stead

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St Mary's College: Working together to improve attendance

St Mary's College encourages families to strive for 100% attendance and achieve no less than 97%. The law requires parents and carers to ensure that their children of school age attend school regularly and on time. The government expects St Mary's College to promote good attendance, reduce absence and act early to address patterns of absence.

This document includes the latest guidance from the DfE which can be found in full [here](#) as well as the protocols and systems used at St Mary's College.

The importance of attendance.

Regular attendance at school is essential in helping students to not only progress academically, but socially, emotionally and morally too. Research and experience tells us that high attendance at school provides children with the best chances of success in all aspects of their life. Pupils who miss an average of 20 school days per school year see negative effects throughout their educational journey resulting in a whole GCSE grade deficit by the time they leave secondary education.

The diagram below shows not only how poor attendance can result on reduced life chances, but also the amount of learning time missed. **One day absent results in 5 hours of missed learning which your child will never get back.**

190 days to attend school. 175 days for holidays, appointments and other activities.	190 days in each year 0 day absent	180 days in school 10 days absence	171 days in school 19 days absence	161 days in school 29 days absence	152 days in school 38 days absence	143 days in school 47 days absence
	100%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%
	<u>Excellent attendance</u> Best chance of success	<u>Satisfactory attendance</u> Average chance of success	<u>Poor attendance</u> Less chance of success	<u>Very poor attendance</u> Serious impact on education and reduced life chances	<u>Significant attendance concern</u> Significant impact on education and reduced life chances	<u>Grave attendance concern</u> Huge impact on education and massively reduced life chances
Hours lost per academic year	0 hours of learning missed	95% attendance - 50 lessons = 50 hours of missed learning.	90% attendance - 95 lessons = 95 hours of missed learning.	85% attendance - 145 lessons = 145 hours of missed learning	80% attendance - 190 lessons = 190 hours of missed learning	75% attendance - 235 lessons = 235 hours of missed learning
Time missed over 5 years (Year 7-11).	0 hours missed.	250 hours of learning over 5 years. This is 9 whole school weeks!	475 hours of missed learning over 5 years. This is half an academic year.	725 hours of missed learning over 5 years. This is over 75% of an academic year.	190 days missed over 5 years. This is one whole academic year missed.	235 days missed over 5 years. This is one academic year and a quarter missed.

There are 190 schools days in an academic year, meaning there are 175 days within a year for holidays, appointments and other activities. **Please note that holidays taken during time term are most likely to result in a fine and will not be authorised.**

Monitoring attendance:

At St Mary's College we are committed to supporting your child to have the best attendance possible and always look to support each child on an individual basis. You can view your child's attendance figure on Edulink.

If your child's attendance **falls below 92%**, we will write to you to notify you of our concerns about their declining attendance. Your child's year team will support them in improving their attendance and we will write to you again if attendance becomes a further concern and will invite you into school for an attendance meeting so we can work together to put strategies in place to support pupils and families where required.

Persistent Absenteeism: Attendance under 90%

Any child of school age in the country is classed as a 'Persistent Absentee' by the government if their attendance is below 90%.

We follow guidance from the government and local authority regarding how to record absence. It should be noted that the guidance from the local authority is that attendance under 90% should be unauthorised unless medical evidence can be provided or there are exceptional circumstances. ***If attendance is below 90%, this indicates that your child is regularly absent and DfE guidance states that if a child is regularly absent because of illness (regardless of whether it is mental or physical), schools can ask for medical evidence as this will help assess how we can help your child by putting reasonable adjustments in place.*** This does not need to be a letter from your doctor or consultant but can be appointment cards, prescriptions or notes of previous consultations.

Absence

If your child is to be absent from school due to illness – or without prior permission – we request that you contact us by telephone – or via the school app – **by no later than 8:45am** on the first day of absence **and every day thereafter.**

Without justifiable reason, absence without prior notice from home and absence without satisfactory explanation is recorded as unauthorised.

To avoid unauthorised absence due to illness, please be aware that:

- most children are fine to attend school with a cold or minor ailment and we would ring you if
- with your authority – and at the Head of School's discretion – staff can administer medication within school in line with the school's Medical Policy (see school website)
- a child can attend school **24 hours** after their last bout of vomiting or diarrhoea if you consider them well enough. In the case of a bug – and in line with NHS guidelines – it would be appropriate to extend their time away for an additional day (48 hours)
- following an episode of head-lice, a child should attend school immediately after the appropriate treatment is applied.

Medical & Dental Appointments

The DfE guidance states that:

*To avoid disruption to your child's attendance, medical and dental appointments should not be booked during the school day whenever reasonably possible. When they are, you should ask the school in advance for a leave of absence and collect them as close to the time of the appointment as possible and return them to school for the rest of the school day afterwards. **Please be aware that approved medical and dental appointments will have a negative impact on a child's overall attendance figure.***

Further details about our attendance policy as a Trust can be found in the document [Attendance Matters: A Parent Guide](#) which includes details about the FPN and prosecution process.