



## **St. Mary's Church of England Primary School**

### **Policy for School Absence during Term Time**

#### **St. Mary's Church of England (Aided) Primary School**

##### **Be the best I can in the love of Christ**

At St. Mary's School we aim to:

1. Create a caring Christian community in which everyone is valued and able to learn and grow together in the love of Christ;
2. Inspire all our children to develop enquiring minds and a lifelong love of learning;
3. Release potential through a broad and creative curriculum;
4. Sustain an environment in which independence, respect and resilience will flourish;
5. Nurture strong relationships between home, school, church and the wider community;
6. Empower the children to become responsible local, national and global citizens.

## **Introduction**

Children of school-age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend that school regularly. Regular attendance is important, not just because the law requires it but because it is the best way of ensuring that a child makes the most of the educational opportunities which are available to him or her. There may be occasions when a child has to miss school—for example, if he or she is unwell. Any other absences should be kept to an absolute minimum.

## **Attendance**

It is extremely important that pupils attend school at all times unless they are unwell. If at all possible, we encourage parents to arrange medical appointments outside school hours although we appreciate that this is not always possible. Naturally we are always sympathetic to reasons such as bereavement.

The Law requires us to record reasons for absence and the Education Welfare Officer regularly checks class registers. When a child is ill we ask that parents telephone the school office on the first morning when their child is not well and leave a message and then telephone each day of the absence.

It is also imperative that your child arrives at school on time every day. Children arriving in class late are very disruptive to the rest of the class and tend to take more time to settle down at the beginning of the day. A late register is kept and checked by the EWO when she checks registers.

Our target for annual attendance is 95% or higher.

## **What the law says**

The regulations make it clear that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term-time holiday.

The code 'H' for family holiday is defined as follows "The current law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in exceptional circumstances and the headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave".

## **How St Mary's deals with requests for absence**

St Mary's policy is that leave for term-time absence will only be granted if there are exceptional circumstances. The headteacher will also consider:

- ❖ The child's age
- ❖ The time and duration of the absence. Please note that a school day is divided into 2 sessions, am and pm.
- ❖ The child's record of attendance
- ❖ Previous term-time absence

Should the headteacher have any concerns, for example the child's average attendance is below 95%, it is highly unlikely that any further absences will be authorised.

## **What are "exceptional circumstances"?**

It is the decision of the Headteacher and Governors as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term-time absence will be considered on an individual basis. An exceptional circumstance is much more likely to be a one-off, unique situation.

## **Issues parents need to be aware of**

Should the school not agree to grant absence and the parents take their child out of school regardless, then this will be counted as unauthorised absence - this is the same as 'truancy'. (Schools are now legally required to record as a specific category all absences which accrue as a consequence of family holidays which have been taken without authorisation).

This may result in the parents being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The FPN is issued with an invoice for £120 and 28 days are given for you to settle the Penalty.

If the FPN is paid within the first 21 days the amount payable is reduced to £60.

The information on how to pay is included on the FPN. Payment cannot be made in part or by instalments.

If you don't pay within the 28 days the Authority will consider instigating a prosecution in the Magistrates Court for the offence of poor school attendance. If proven this could result in a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child and/or a parenting order or a community service order and also costs.

The school may also inform our Educational Welfare Officer.

*Further information on term-time absence and other issues relating to school attendance or Education Welfare can be obtained from the school or West Sussex Grid for Learning. (WSGFL)*