



St Mary's Catholic First School
Lucetta Lane, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 2DD
Tel: 01305 262258
Fax: 01305 257101

E-mail: office@stmarysdorchester.dorset.sch.uk
Website: www.stmarysdorchester.dorset.sch.uk



Head Teacher: Mrs Paula Fearn

5th October 2018

Dear Parents

Information for all parents and carers on the importance of attendance and the attendance process.

St Mary's/Dorchester Area Schools Partnership (DASP) are committed to ensuring the best for all our learners and are working together with parents and carers to support children and families. All schools are working hard to promote good attendance and have common systems in place to work with families when attendance drops below an acceptable level.

You will be aware of the importance of good school attendance in improving a young person's chance of success in life and establishing positive attitudes to life-long learning. There is clear evidence of the link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement. Of pupils who have less than 90% attendance, only 35% achieve five or more GCSEs at A * to C including Maths and English, but 73% of pupils who have attendance of 95% or more will achieve this.

If a child has an attendance level of 90% they will have missed one day a fortnight in school. Over a school year this will represent four weeks of absence. If this level of absence were maintained for a five year period it would mean half a school year would have been missed.

If St Mary's/DASP are concerned about a child's attendance they will talk to the parents and write to them to explain their concerns. The school will then monitor the child's attendance expecting to see an improvement. The Dorset County Council (DCC) School Attendance Service will be made aware of the school's concerns. If no improvement is made, the family will be invited to attend an Attendance Panel.

Here at St Mary's/DASP we are determined to ensure that all our students have the opportunity to achieve success and have an excellent record of attendance. Where there is cause for concern you will be contacted and attendance closely monitored. If attendance does not improve sufficiently, you will be invited to an Attendance Panel. This meeting is an opportunity for the school, family and a representative from DCC's School Attendance Service to meet together to discuss why your child has such a high absence rate and seek solutions to any problems.

The Panel/Meeting can recommend several outcomes, which can include; a further period of close monitoring with specified targets for attendance; issuing a £60 Penalty Notice, a Parenting Order or seeking prosecution which could result in a fine of up to £1,000.

The attendance process is designed to identify poor attendees quickly and address the issues that are affecting their attendance. When attendance improves, monitoring will continue and, if it falls, the Attendance Process will be resumed. All schools hope that the Attendance Panel will not be needed and that all pupils will have a good record of attendance, are happy and successful and benefit from their time in school.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs Paula Fearn
Head Teacher



Attendance Information and Statement for Parents

It is essential that children and young people form good habits of regular attendance at school from an early age and that good attendance is maintained throughout their school career. St Mary's and the Dorchester Area Schools Partnership (DASP) are committed to working together to ensure that there is a consistent approach to school attendance. It is a legal requirement that all children should attend their educational provision and it is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure that their children attend school.

St Mary's/DASP have agreed the following:

- It is important that pupils are in school on time. Time keeping is not only important in obtaining maximum benefit from education it is also a key skill for adult life. Lateness is monitored by the school and contributes to absence rates.
- St Mary's/DASP will monitor the attendance of our pupils and work closely with Dorset County Council's School Attendance Service to support children and young people whose attendance levels are causing concern.
- Whilst we understand that children do become ill on occasions, children who lose a lot of time at school can suffer in the long term from significant gaps in their learning. If a child's health continues to affect their education, schools are obliged to make a referral to School Health to ensure that appropriate medical advice and support is provided.
- If a child is ill it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that they inform the school. St Mary's/DASP schools all operate a targeted "First Day Call" system, which means they will contact you to ask why your child is not in school and when they are expected to return.
- No Leave of Absence will be granted during term time, except in exceptional circumstances.
- We are therefore informing parents/carers that, should you wish to take your child out of school for any leave of absence, holidays or otherwise, requests will not be routinely granted. It is essential that any requests for leave of absence are discussed with your child's Head Teacher prior to the request being made. Any absence which has not been authorised by your child's school will be recorded as "unauthorised" and this has the potential to impact on your child's overall absence figure and could result in legal action.

St Mary's/DASP is committed to ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to thrive and achieve, and recognises that good attendance is central to this.