



**St Mary's Grammar School Christian  
Brothers' Grammar School**

**STUDENT  
ATTENDANCE &  
PUNCTUALITY  
POLICY**

**MAY 2021**

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. When children are not in school they are deprived of the educational opportunities which school has to offer them and they are at much greater risk of subsequently becoming socially excluded and disadvantaged. Also if they are not in school then they may be at risk - at risk of becoming either the perpetrators or the victims of crime. St Mary's CBGS aims to develop through its ethos the value of good attendance and punctuality, and that we will respond promptly to all instances of non-attendance and lateness.
- 1.2 Levels of attendance are a key indicator of a school's overall performance and St Mary's CBGS sets its annual attendance target as 95%. We are also required not just to improve levels of overall attendance but to reduce the numbers of persistent absentees (a persistent absentee being defined as a child whose attendance rate is below 85%).
- 1.3 St Mary's CBGS wants to encourage and to promote good attendance in as many ways and for as many children as we can. There also needs to be balance between the specific strategies used to address the needs of those children who do - for whatever reason - experience difficulty in attending regularly and the unique circumstances of the child. A whole school approach to attendance will, therefore, focus primarily on promoting attendance but will also address the issue of absenteeism, especially persistent absenteeism, when it occurs. Such an approach will be both proactive and reactive and will combine, in appropriate measure, assistance with insistence.

## **2. TYPES OF ABSENCE**

- 2.1 The parent of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Should the absence be authorised by the school the parent cannot be convicted.
- 2.2 **Authorised Absence**
  - 2.21 Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be away or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.
  - 2.22 Parents may not authorise absence; only schools can do this. Should school staff have reason to doubt that the explanation offered about a particular absence is genuine, this should be referred to the Senior Teacher in charge of Attendance.
  - 2.23 Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:
    - illness, medical or dental appointments;
    - days of religious observance;
    - study leave;
    - exclusion;
    - Traveller child travelling;
    - family bereavement;
    - a child caring for a sick or disabled family member (authorisation should, in such instances, be of limited duration);
    - involvement in a public performance;

- family holidays (when the school has given approval in advance and for no more than 10 days);
- 'special' occasions (the nature of such special occasions will be determined by schools on an individual basis);
- lateness (when the child arrives after the register has closed and offers a satisfactory explanation – see below under Lateness).

2.24 Excessive amounts of authorised absence may often be as damaging to continuity of learning as unauthorised absence; schools therefore should only authorise absence sparingly and only after careful consideration, particularly where children have a history of irregular attendance. Inappropriate authorisation of absence may seriously undermine effective intervention by the Education Welfare Service and compromise any potential legal action.

## 2.3 **Unauthorised Absence**

2.31 Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

2.32 Absence should not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, minding the house, etc);
- family holidays (which are taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge and/or are in excess of any time agreed by the school);
- lateness when the child arrives after the register has closed and fails to offer a satisfactory explanation; this is often a difficult and potentially contentious issue – see below under Lateness;
- 'special' occasions (when the school does not agree that leave should be given).

## 2.4 **Persistent Absence**

Persistent absence (or PA) is absence of 20% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore if his/her attendance is less than 80% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

## 2.5 **Approved Educational Activity**

2.51 Children who are educated off site or dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, need not be marked as authorised absent, provided that such activities are:

- of an educational nature,
- approved by the school,
- supervised.

2.52 These children may be recorded as on an approved educational activity. This means that for statistical purposes, particular activities (such as approved work experience, field trips and educational visits, approved sporting activities, link courses and study leave) can be counted as statistically 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

### **3. POOR ATTENDERS**

- 3.1 The following far from exhaustive list identifies those children who may potentially be poor attenders. These categories are not mutually exclusive and many clearly overlap. It is of course not inferred that such children are automatically prone to poor attendance nor does it seek to stigmatise such children in any way. But such a checklist can be a useful tool in helping to identify at an early stage those pupils who may be prone to experience difficulties.

Children:

- whose parents have recently separated;
  - who have recently moved into the area;
  - who are ‘looked after’;
  - who join a school midway through the school year;
  - who have caring responsibilities at home;
  - who have recently missed a lot of school time through illness;
  - whose siblings (and/or parents) have been poor school attenders;
  - whose performance/attainment level in school tends to be poor;
  - who may be teased or bullied;
  - who have difficulty accessing the curriculum;
  - who are persistently disruptive;
  - who have previously been excluded;
  - whose parents are experiencing severe financial hardship (and may not be able to afford bus fare, uniform, etc);
  - who are under pressure from examinations.
- 3.2 It is vital that key staff such as Form Teachers and Year Heads have clear access to information on those aspects of a child’s life (both within and outside of school) which may be relevant to that child’s attendance and behaviour patterns.

## 4. REGISTERS

### 4.1 Register Codes

The Register codes are as follows:

- /\ - Present am/pm
- B - Bereavement
- C - Suspended
- E - Educated off site.
- F - Extended family holiday (agreed) - Authorised Absence.
- G - Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess of agreement) - Unauthorised Absence.
- H - Other absence
- I - Illness (not medical/dental appointments) - Authorised Absence.
- J - Extended Leave - For non-national family emergency travel required to their home country
- L - Late (before registers close) - Present.
- M - Medical/Dental appointments - Authorised Absence.
- O - Other Exceptional Circumstance.
- P - Approved Sporting Activity
- R - Religious Observance
- S - Study Leave
- T - Traveller child travelling
- U - Late after registers close without an acceptable explanation - Unauthorised Absence
- V - Educational visit or trip
- W - Work Experience - Approved Educational Activity.

4.2 Schools are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and at some stage during the afternoon session. The Form Register is of paramount importance and are legal documents. Should the parents of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court.

4.3 While there is a statutory requirement to complete registers - and to keep them for a period of not less than 3 years - there is another side to the matter which should not be overlooked. The daily requirement to register children can and should be perceived as an opportunity for the school to receive children formally from home and serve as an introduction to the school session.

4.4 St Mary's CBGS's practice is a ten-minute session in the morning with the Form Teacher and in the afternoon during period 6, when the roll is called by the class teacher. Registration is important for all involved, allowing for a degree of familiarity between Form Teacher and Form Class, and for the daily implementation of pastoral and tutorial matters - not only influence the maintenance of an accurate attendance record but also help to foster habits of good attendance. It is vital that children are continually reminded that the school takes all matters of attendance and punctuality very seriously.

4.5 St Mary's CBGS's policy with regard to registration will be regularly communicated to parents. Parents need to be made aware and reminded of the school's expectations with regard to the times when registers open/close, procedures to be followed in the case of lateness, details of any practice regarding phone-calls/notes explaining absences, etc.

4.6 A collection of accurate and well-maintained registers provides an on-going and immediately relevant and accessible database on the basis of which informed debate and strategic planning about attendance matters can take place. Such registers are the basic tools with which our

school and its Education Welfare Officer can early begin to identify and target individual pupils who are beginning to experience attendance difficulties, and the importance which a school attaches to its registers can be used to remind children, parents, governors and staff that the school regards good attendance as one of its top priorities.

## **5. PROMOTING GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

5.1 Our school with its positive ethos will continuously highlight and promote good attendance. A system of rewards and/or incentives can show the whole school community how highly attendance is valued and can demonstrate to children and their families that the school values and appreciates their efforts. Promoting good school attendance should be the responsibility of not just the school's pastoral staff but of the whole staff team.

### **5.2 Excellent/improved attendance might be acknowledged by:**

- letters to parents;
- certificates;
- photo-displays featuring named pupils;
- references in school newsletters/bulletins;
- stickers in homework diaries;
- regular features/presentations on an attendance notice board;
- presentations at assemblies, parents' evenings, etc;
- linking attendance to a school's merit/credit system;
- personal congratulations from senior staff.
- House points

### **5.3 Who to Acknowledge:**

- 100% attenders and other excellent attenders (over a term, a year);
- consistently good attenders;
- poor attenders who show a marked/any improvement;
- form or year groups with consistently good attendance;
- form or year groups who show a marked improvement;
- year 8 pupils who begin their secondary career with a good attendance record;
- the whole school

## **6. LATENESS**

### **REPEATED LATENESS AT THE BEGINNING OF A SCHOOL SESSION CAN AMOUNT TO FAILURE TO ATTEND REGULARLY.**

6.1 Registration of Rolls is at 9.00 am.

6.2 St Mary's CBGS has a clear and consistent policy and practice for promoting punctuality and addressing all forms of lateness. This policy is rigorous and transparent. In particular and exceptional circumstances, we may wish to extend the period during which registers are kept open - eg in severe weather conditions or when there are unavoidable problems with local transport.

6.2 In addressing lateness St Mary's:

- has a clearly-defined and consistently applied policy. (This is precise in terms of the times when registers will close and any sanctions which may need to be applied.)
- publicises this policy in school and communicate it to parents;
- balances any sanctions with positive encouragement;
- ensures that class teachers/year heads apply any lateness sanctions fairly and consistently;
- praises and acknowledge punctuality;
- praises and acknowledge latecomers who improve;
- ensures that teachers set a good example by arriving punctually for registration and for lessons;
- follows up the reasons for lateness and be alert to any emerging patterns or problems;
- sets in place systems for effectively monitoring lateness – (latecomers should sign a late-slip or a late-book (and give a reason/explanation for their lateness) and this late-book should be regularly monitored);
- does not cover for lateness (if a child is absent when the register closes he/she should be marked absent - to leave a gap in the register and then to mark a child down as present when/if he/she eventually arrives is to disguise any difficulty which that child may be experiencing and to delay support which might be offered).
- educates parents and pupils that the responsibility for punctuality is theirs.

## **7. RE-INTEGRATING LONG-TERM ABSENTEES**

7.1 A number of children miss long periods of school through sickness, exclusion, school refusal/phobia, etc - and may feel especially vulnerable when they do eventually return. It is vital therefore to make the transition back to full-time schooling as smooth and untraumatic as possible. Form Teacher can consult with SLT for School Community for advice.

7.2 Ideally the return of the long-term absentee needs to be carefully planned in advance, preferably with all parties concerned - child, parents, teacher and Education Welfare Officer agreeing to a written programme or plan. Engagement with the tutor team and management of Belfast Hospital School may also be appropriate.

- 7.3 To ease the return of the long-term absentee St Mary's may need to:
- nominate a key person to co-ordinate, monitor and review the child's return – as organized by SLT in charge of Attendance;
  - ensure that all staff are aware of and alert to the situation;
  - consider the possible need for a phased or gradual return;
  - consider the timetable and determine what is immediately possible and manageable for the child;
  - consider whether extra classroom support (from the Special Needs or Learning Support Department) is appropriate;
  - ensure that any re-introductory programme/timetable is flexible;
  - consider the need to allocate another child as a “mentor”/”buddy” to the returner;
  - ensure that the child knows what is expected of him.
- 7.4 ALWAYS ENSURE THAT THE SCHOOL KEEPS IN TOUCH WITH ANY CHILD WHO IS ABSENT FOR LONG PERIODS. (The child and his family still need to feel part of the school community throughout the period of absence.)
- 7.5 ALWAYS MAKE THE CHILD FEEL WELCOMED BACK (even if his past behaviour has been difficult).
- 7.6 NEVER MAKE SARCASTIC COMMENTS (a casual, 'Nice of you to turn up' or 'Had a nice holiday?' can in a moment destroy hours of careful preparation).
- 7.7 ALWAYS ENSURE THAT THE CHILD HAS SOMEONE TO GO TO IF HE BEGINS TO FIND THE SITUATION DIFFICULT - as arranged by SLT for School Community.
- 7.8 Children returning after a long absence cannot perform miracles - renewing or remaking friendships, catching up in the classroom, readjusting to a structured day - all take time and do not happen overnight. But throughout the process children must feel that THE SCHOOL IS GLAD TO SEE THEM AND VALUES THEIR RETURN.

## **8. STAFF ROLES**

### **8.1 The Form Tutor**

- is the key person in the school's pastoral care system;
- promotes habits of regular attendance and punctuality both with individuals and with the form group;
- accurately maintains registers and responds to parental notes and unexplained absences;
- is alert to absence being condoned for trivial or spurious reasons;
- is alert to emerging patterns of absence and lateness;

- is aware of and consistent in applying school systems for monitoring and promoting attendance;
- requests the support/intervention of the Year Head when appropriate;
- Completes the monthly attendance audit forwarded by SLT and returns to HoY and SLT member with responsibility for attendance.

## 8.2 **The Subject Teacher**

- sets an example of punctuality by arriving for lessons on time;
- keeps an accurate register of attendance in each lesson and promptly feeds back absences to Form Teachers and/or Year Heads;
- deals with lateness to lessons consistently and promptly (action taken immediately is often more effective than a detention at a later date);
- recognises that learning difficulties are an important factor in poor attendance;
- explores methods of making specific provision for children who are frequent or long-term absentees;
- welcomes and values the presence of all children in his/her lessons.

## 8.3 **The Head of Department**

- examines the curriculum in order to develop ways of improving the quality of the classroom experience;
- develops sensitive and effective departmental re-entry strategies which welcome children back from a period of absence and offers support in the organisation of missed work;
- regularly liaises with Form Tutors and Year Heads on attendance related matters.

## 8.4 **The Head of Year**

- assumes a key role in co-ordinating all aspects of attendance related matters;
- ensures that registers are properly maintained and that absences are appropriately followed up;
- generally monitors and supervises the work of Form Teachers in promoting attendance;
- effectively liaises with other senior staff on attendance related matters/audits etc;
- ensures that up-to-date attendance data is regularly available;
- when necessary communicates with and meets parents of children experiencing attendance difficulties;

### 8.5 **SLT in charge of Attendance**

- ensures that a whole-school attendance policy is implemented (and regularly reviewed);
- Carries out a monthly audit of attendance and requests completion of the pro-forma;
- Liaises closely with and regularly meets the school appointed Education & Welfare Officer (EWO);
- ensures that this policy is communicated to pupils, staff and parents;
- ensures that ensures that detailed attendance data is regularly collected and used to inform strategic planning on attendance matters;
- ensures that the set whole-school attendance targets are achieved, through monitoring of attendance data and feedback from Year Heads;
- reports to SLT on attendance matters;
- promotes a school ethos which values and promotes excellent levels of attendance and punctuality.

### 8.6 **The Principal** (through their Senior Leadership Team)

- ensures that a whole-school attendance policy is implemented (and regularly reviewed);
- ensures that this policy is communicated to children, staff, parents and governors;
- ensures that detailed attendance data is regularly collected and used to inform strategic planning on attendance matters;
- ensures that whole-school attendance targets are set and achieved;
- reports to governors on attendance matters;
- creates a school ethos which values and promotes excellent levels of attendance and punctuality.

## Procedures for Improving Attendance

**Aim:** To promote positive attitudes of behaviour and attendance by creating a warm, welcoming and secure atmosphere where pupils are valued.

### Shared Responsibility of Parent and School

**School:** The school offers to parents and pupils a safe, secure environment where attendance is monitored effectively and support is provided where necessary. Statutory Attendance Target is 95%

**Parents have a statutory obligation, (The Children (NI) Order 1995) to ensure their child attends school regularly.**

#### *Contact in case of absence*

**First Day:** Parent contacts school with a reason for absence, the School Receptionist will record the reason and expected return in the Pupils' Absence Log.

**Return to School:** Parents to send in a letter explaining absence, a medical certificate if required for lengthy absences.

### School Procedures for following up absences

#### **Daily:**

*Form Teacher:* monitor punctuality and attendance within the form class. Contact parents with any concerns.

*Head of Year:* monitor absences within the year group.

#### **Weekly:**

*Form Teacher:* Review Absences printout and contact parents with any concerns.

- If an absentee returns with no note/letter, the Form Teacher gives the pupil a pro forma to be returned the next day, on which the parent/guardian gives an explanation for the absence. This form is retained by the Form Teacher.
- If a pupil fails to return with this pro forma, the pupil is sent to his Head of Year for a different pro forma (different colour). This form will explain the process of referral to the Education Welfare Service (EWS).
- If a pupil fails to return this form, the pupil will receive a final pro forma from SLT with responsibility for Attendance, this will inform parents that all reasonable requests to explain absence have failed and that a referral to EWS is imminent.

If a pupil's attendance falls below 85% they will be referred to EWS immediately, if there has been any break down in home-school communication on attendance issues.

#### **Monthly:**

*SLT Attendance Member:* Monitor monthly attendance patterns and ensure completion of the audit Liaise with FT/HoY/HoS/Parents/External Agencies as required.

## **Punctuality Policy**

The school wishes to develop in our students an awareness of self-discipline, part of which is the importance of punctuality, not only while at school, but later in the work place. We acknowledge our role in developing and encouraging this trait in our students and actively seek the co-operation of parents/guardians in this task. To facilitate and to enhance this process we will undertake the following procedures:

- a) Identify students with a poor punctuality record, i.e. not in registration by 9.00am, through Attendance Registers.
- b) Inform parents of their children's record in this matter in the *expectation of parental support*.
- c) Raise awareness amongst our students of the importance of punctuality.
- d) Provide incentives to encourage the "good habits" of punctuality.

### **Punctuality Procedures**

Any pupil who is late for school i.e. arrives after the 9.00 am bell must register in the Lunchroom up until 10.30 am. Anyone late after this time must register in the main office.

If a student is late 3 times in one calendar month, he is assigned to after school detention. Whenever a student is required to do after school detention his parents will be informed. Further sanctions are outlined below:

- 1. Initial 3 lates After School Detention
- 2. Further 3 lates 2 x After School Detention
- 3. Further 3 lates Staff Day Detention (9am-12pm)
- 4. Further 3 lates Saturday Detention (9am-12pm)
- 5. Further 3 lates 1 Day Suspension (Followed by HoY return to school parental interview)



# ***St. Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School***

147a Glen Road

Belfast

BT11 8NR

Phone: (028) 9029 4000

Fax.: (028) 9029 4009



Date

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Name of Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

As your son's Form Teacher, I would like to express some concern regarding his punctuality to school. Our policy on punctuality insists that punctuality is monitored regularly. During the past calendar month he has been late for morning registration on 3 occasions. This letter is informing you that he has been put on the After School Detention list and will be on Detention on:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Detention is from 3.30 to 4.45 pm.

Yours faithfully

\_\_\_\_\_  
Form Teacher



*St. Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School*  
*Scoil Mhuire na mBráithre Críostaí*



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Telephone: (028) 9029 4000    Fax.: (028) 9029 4009  
Website: [www.stmaryscbgs.com](http://www.stmaryscbgs.com)

'Nurturing faith, promoting partnership, excelling in teaching and learning, creating a caring school community and inspiring transformational leadership.'

Dear Parent/Guardian

I understand that there may be some occasions when it is not possible for your son to attend school but **details of any absence must be reported to me, as your son's Form Teacher, by letter, on the day of his return.**

Failure to do this promptly may result in your son's absence being recorded as unapproved and the setting of an after school detention. Whilst we appreciate a phone call explanation for your son's absence this does not replace the legal requirement of a parental explanation note.

Your son has been absent recently but we have not yet received any written explanation from you. It is vital that you submit an explanation otherwise we will need to take this further.

<b>Pupil Name:</b> _____	<b>Form Class:</b> _____
<b>Date of absence:</b> _____	
<b>Parental Explanation:</b>          	
<b>Parental Signature:</b> _____	<b>Date:</b> _____

This explanation letter will be kept in your son's attendance folder and I thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Form Teacher



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Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian

The minimum expected attendance level for every St Mary's student is 95%. Educational research clearly links high levels of school attendance with improved academic achievement. It is vital therefore that every pupil attends regularly.

**Unfortunately your son's attendance has already fallen to a level which is of very serious concern to the school and the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).**

Whilst I understand that there may be very legitimate reasons for this absence, it is essential that you ensure that your son's attendance improves with immediate effect. I have already met with the EWO to discuss his current level of absence and will be obliged to refer your son officially should this not improve.

Yours faithfully

Senior Teacher (Attendance)



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Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian

The minimum expected attendance level for every St Mary's student is 95%. Educational research clearly links high levels of school attendance with improved academic achievement. It is vital therefore that every pupil attends regularly.

**Unfortunately your son's attendance has now fallen below 90%.**

In previous correspondence your son's Form Teacher explained that failure to improve attendance would result in further intervention. As Year Head it is now necessary for me to arrange for a short interview at a time of your convenience. This meeting will allow us to discuss attendance issues and identify strategies for improvement. Ongoing special circumstances which may have resulted in this attendance drop can also be addressed at this interview. I will be in touch soon to arrange this meeting. I would ask that you ensure your son's improved attendance with immediate effect - He should only miss school in the most serious of circumstances. If school intervention and support does not result in the necessary improvement in your son's attendance then it may be necessary to involve outside agencies.

Yours faithfully

Head of Year



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Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian

The minimum expected attendance level for every St Mary's student is 95%. Educational research clearly links high levels of school attendance with improved academic achievement. It is vital therefore that every pupil attends regularly. Every month St Mary's audits the pupil attendance figures and this data has identified some concerns. Your son's attendance:

**Has now fallen below the 95% school requirement / Continues to sit below the 95% school requirement**

I would ask that you ensure his attendance improves with immediate effect and that he only misses school in the most serious of circumstances.

Failure to improve attendance will result in further intervention by the Year Head however, if there are ongoing special circumstances which may have resulted in this attendance drop, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss this.

I would ask you to sign and return this letter to me as acknowledgment that you have received it.

Yours faithfully

Form Teacher

Pupil Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Form Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Actual Attendance \_\_\_\_\_ % for month of \_\_\_\_\_

Parental Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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Dear Parent/Guardian

The minimum expected attendance level for every St Mary's student is 95%. Educational research clearly links high levels of school attendance with improved academic achievement. It is vital therefore that every pupil attends regularly.

**Unfortunately your son's attendance has now fallen close to the 85%  
automatic referral to the Education & Welfare Office.**

Your son's Form Teacher and Year Head have been working to address and improve this level of attendance. Unfortunately this has not resulted in the improvement we had hoped for. It is essential that you ensure your son's attendance improves with immediate effect to avoid the involvement of the Education and Welfare Officer.

Yours faithfully

Senior Teacher



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Dear Parent/Guardian

The minimum expected attendance level for every St Mary's student is 95%. Educational research clearly links high levels of school attendance with improved academic achievement. It is vital therefore that every pupil attends regularly.

**Unfortunately your son's attendance was of serious concern last academic year and will be closely monitored over the coming months.**

Whilst I understand that there may be very legitimate reasons for this absence, it is essential that you ensure that your son's attendance improves with immediate effect this school year. The Head of Year and Head of School are aware of these major attendance concerns and have worked with your son to address this. Failure to improve this level of absenteeism will potentially affect your son's academic performance and may require the intervention of the Education & Welfare Office. All instances of absence should be reported to the Form Teacher in writing on the day of your son's return to school.

I appreciate your support and co-operation in this matter as we work together to ensure the best education for your son this year.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Siobhan Kelly  
Principal



*St. Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School*  
*Scoil Mhuire na mBráithre Críostaí*



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*'Nurturing faith, promoting partnership, excelling in teaching and learning, creating a caring school community and inspiring transformational leadership.'*

DATE

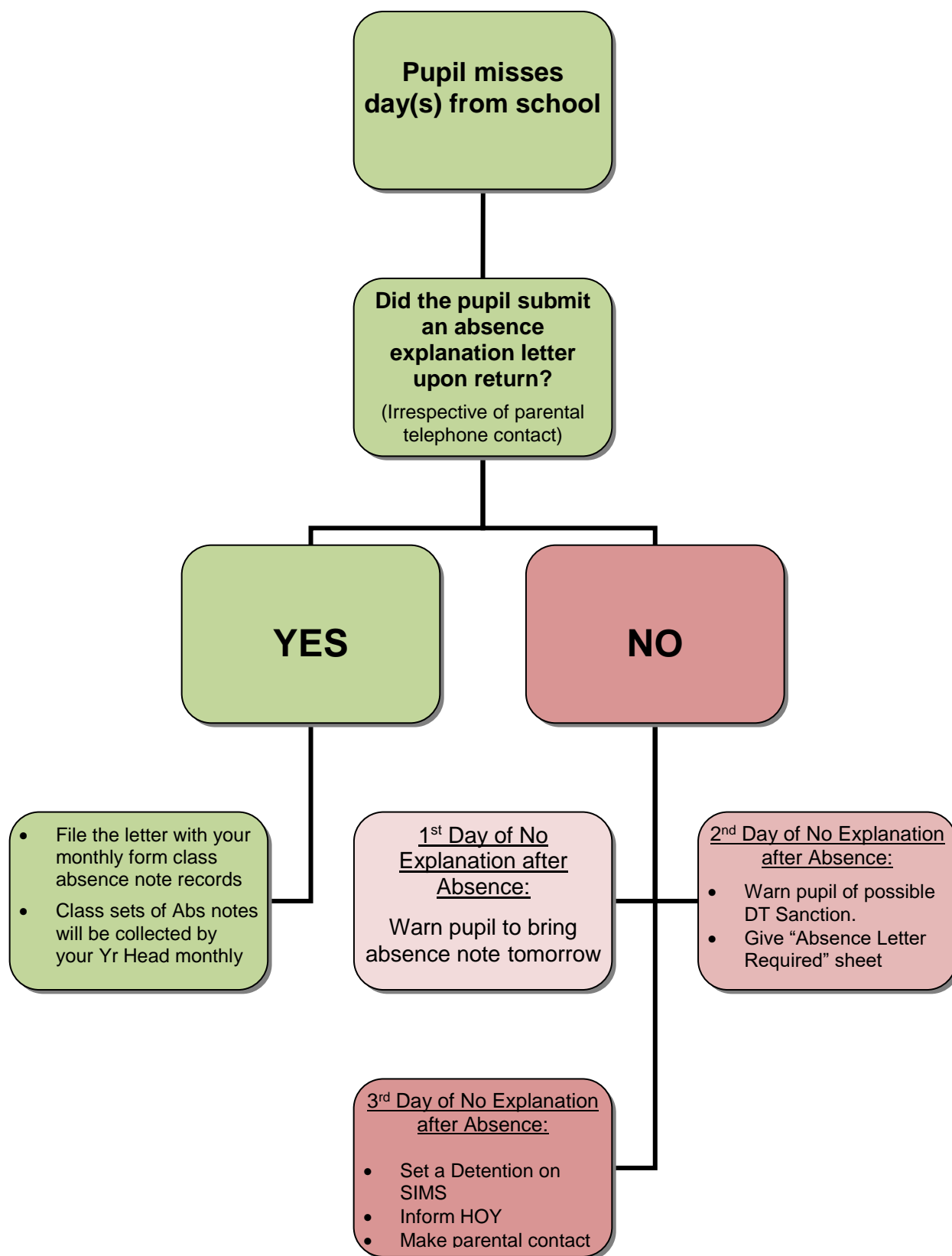
Dear Parent/Guardian

Please be advised that any holiday taken during term time is recorded on the school attendance module as an unauthorised absence. As such, this will have an impact upon your son's attendance level for the remainder of the school year. I would ask you to ensure that he makes every effort to attend daily as a further drop in attendance may require the intervention of the Education & Welfare officer assigned to our school.

Yours faithfully

Head of Year

## ST MARY'S CBGS – ABSENCE NOTES

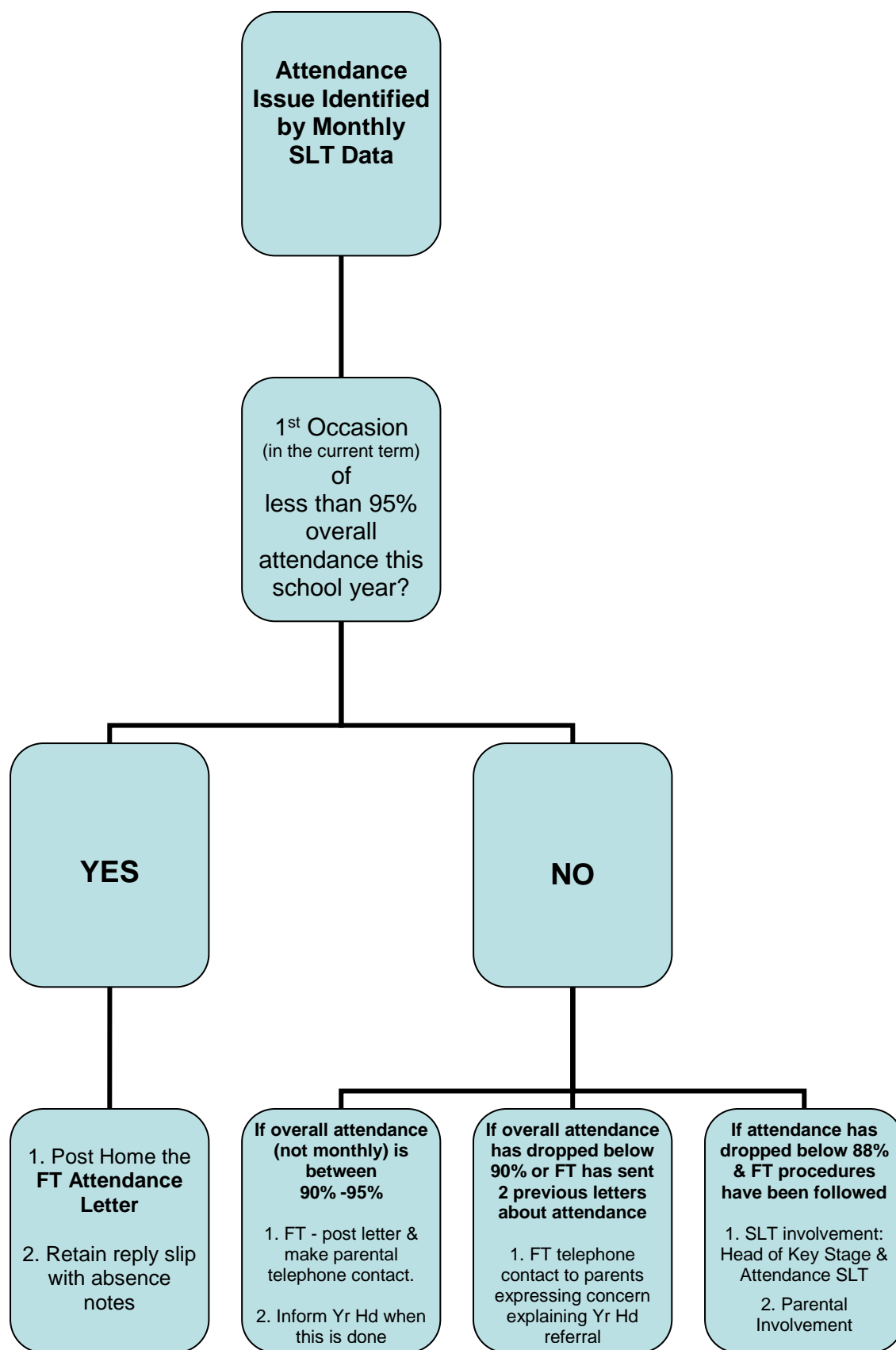


**Key Stage 3 & 4 Form Teachers must ring home on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of absence & inform Year Head**

**Yr 13 & 14 Form Teachers must ring home on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of absence & inform Year Head**

*As a Form Teacher it is your responsibility to collect & retain absence notes. It is also your responsibility to follow these procedures if absence notes are not submitted.*

## ST MARY'S CBGS – ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES



**Key Stage 3 & 4 Form Teachers must ring home on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of absence & inform Year Head**

**Yr 13 & 14 Form Teachers must ring home on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of absence & inform Year Head**

*There may be occasions when this process needs to be amended or fast tracked by the Year Head or SLT*

## 12. COVID-19 Attendance Policy Issues

The Covid-19 pandemic has, and will continue have implications for our attendance. As a result of the unprecedented Covid-19 circumstances that schools have faced and may possibly continue to face, several amendments were made to the Department of Education existing guidance with the intention of simplifying attendance recording for the school year 2020-2021. Further changes to the coding were made in January 2021 in which new codes were created in SIMS to address Covid related absences.

For the academic year 2020-2021, parents/guardians were informed that physical absence notes are not appropriate at this time. This process will continue into the academic year 2021-2022. Parents email the form teacher with details/dates of a pupil absence on the day of their return to school. This approach replaces the traditional, hand written parental letter and should come from a parental email address, not that of the student.

Parents were furnished with the appropriate email addresses for subject and form teachers. During the August inductions, pupils were again given the email details for their respective Form Teachers and Heads of Year. This will continue to be the case for as long as email absences are required.

Form Teachers now retain all absence emails in online folders as these may be required by EWO/SLT for audit purposes.

The Department of Education produced an August 2020 Circular to address attendance coding during the current pandemic. As a result of this our staff were advised by email of the following:

- Any student who has **been identified by parental email** as being absent to take a covid test, are awaiting results of their covid test or are self-isolating, should be marked as **“J” with a red flag to identify that it is Covid related**. This will ensure that pupils are not marked as “absent” as a result of covid-linked, enforced absence.
- This code is used in the assumption that students continue to engage in socially distanced, online learning during this period. Any student who fails to engage in online learning should, as was the procedure during lockdown, be identified to their Head of Year. In these instances, the Head of Year will liaise with home and, if necessary, arrange for the “J” code to be amended to the most appropriate code outlined below with a red flag noting that the student has failed to engage effectively in their learning.
- If a **pupil has tested positive for Covid-19** they should be marked as **“(” during their period of absence as they are “ill.”**
- Pupils continue to be marked as **“N”** until form teachers receive, and retain in the online folder, the **confirmation email from parents to explain any absence**. This is obviously different when a whole cohort is asked to socially distance – they will be marked as “J” without need for parental emails as the school, in consultation with PHA and EA, has enacted this.

## JANUARY 2021 EFFECTIVE CHANGES - Covid-19 Absence Attendance Codes in SIMS

As outlined above, new additional Attendance Codes are now available in SIMS .net. Code 8 and P have reverted to their normal use prior to Covid-19. Attendance recording functionality remains the same, however given the similarity of the additional new codes staff must take care to ensure that the new codes are recorded accurately to avoid keying errors.

Full details of the code change can be found in the [DE Circular 2020/08 Addendum - Attendance guidance and Absence Recording](#) effective from 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021. DE have updated guidance on potential scenarios which may occur in school

Attendance/absence of pupils should be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon registration sessions using the codes and information recorded by schools is published by the Department.

### Department of Education - Summary of Attendance Codes for Covid related incidences:

V	Educational Visit
W	Work Experience
!	No Attendance Required
{	Covid-19 Illness Confirmed
}	Covid-19 Illness Suspected / Unconfirmed
-	All should attend / No mark recorded
1	AEP (ELB)
2	Home/hospital tuition (ELB)
3	Elective Home Education
4	Pupil Referral Unit
5	Another mainstream school (EF)
6	Training Organisation (under EF)
7	FE College (EF)
8	Intensive Support Learning Unit
9	CAMHS
[	Covid-19 Self-Isolating & Learning from Home
]	Covid-19 Learning from Home - Social Distancing
{	Covid-19 Self-Isolating - Vulnerable Pupil or ...
}	Covid-19 Self-Isolating - No evidence of learn...

Code	Code description	Statistical Meaning	SIMS description
{	Left Open Bracket  <i>In SIMS - Press Shift key and 9</i>	Authorised Absence	<b>Covid-19 Illness Confirmed</b> <i>This code should be used in situations where a pupil is sick and Covid-19 is confirmed. This includes pupils who test positive (including asymptomatic) and able to work remotely</i>
}	Right Closed Bracket  <i>In SIMS - Press Shift key and 0</i>	Authorised Absence	<b>Covid-19 Illness Suspected / Unconfirmed</b> <i>This code should be used in situations where Covid-19 is suspected but unconfirmed (a pupil is sick and showing symptoms)</i>
{	Left Open Curly Bracket  <i>In SIMS - Press Shift key and [</i>	Unauthorised Absence	<b>Covid-19 Self-Isolating – Vulnerable Pupil or Household member</b> <i>This code should be used in situations where a pupil has chosen not to attend school due to own underlying health conditions or due to health conditions of other household / family members. If a pupil is sick, they should be recorded as such.</i>
}	Right Closed Curly Bracket  <i>In SIMS - Press Shift and ]</i>	Unauthorised Absence	<b>Covid-19 Self-Isolating - No evidence of learning from home</b> <i>This code should be used in situations where a pupil is required to self-isolate but is not learning from home or sufficient evidence has not been provided to satisfy school</i>
[	Left Open Square Bracket	Approved Activity	<b>Covid-19 Self-Isolating &amp; Learning from Home</b> <b>Formerly Code 8</b> (used between March 2020 and December 2020)  <i>This code should be used in situations where a pupil is required to self-isolate on the advice of school / PHA or medical health professional and is learning from home and is able to evidence learning from home – this does not discount from attendance record – maximum of 2 weeks usage unless advised by PHA. (can be used for multiple periods of isolation as necessary)</i>  <i>This code may also be used in exceptional circumstances where medical evidence is provided to support the child abstaining from school</i>
]	Right Closed Square Bracket	Approved Activity	<b>Covid-19 Learning from Home - Social Distancing due to timetabling</b> <b>Formerly Code P</b> (used between March 2020 and December 2020)  <i>This code should be used in situations where pupils are not required to attend physically at school due to social distancing rules, imposed by DE or school. E.g. pupils required to attend on certain days or for a certain number of hours per day (not to be used if pupils are self-isolating)</i>  <i>This decision must be informed by health professional advice</i>

### 13. SUMMARY OF ATTENDANCE CODES (Non Covid)

- A** This code may be used when a pupil is absent from school to pursue an **artistic endeavour** which has **not been organised** by the school e.g. audition, speech festival, music exam, awards ceremony.
- B** This code is to be used for **bereavement for immediate family** only e.g. father, mother, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, nephew, niece or other relative who is a member of the household.
- C** Suspension
- D** Every effort should be made to establish the reason for the pupil's absence from school. However, after a period of 5 school days following the pupil's return to school, if it has not been possible to obtain a reason, the absence should be coded using Code D (Code N will be used up until then as a temporary code).
- F** Family holiday (agreed). **Most family holidays are categorised as unauthorised (Code G)**, but in exceptional circumstances a family holiday may be coded as Code F as it is judged to be important to the well-being of the family.
- G** Family holiday (**NOT** agreed).
- H** Code H is used when the absence **cannot be coded under any other code**. e.g. shopping, birthday, un-notified illness, or false allegation of illness.
- I** This should be used if a pupil is absent for a full day because of  
(a) illness  
(b) Medical/dental appointment.  
If a pupil has been given permission to leave school for part of the school day and does not return as arranged this code should be used to cover the pm absence.
- A written note explaining that a pupil was ill MUST be supplied BEFORE this code can be used. For the Academic Year 2020-2021 an email absence note will replace the handwritten parental explanation.**
- J** Extended leave code – Agreed by the school & Principal  
The code may be used by non-national families for the following purposes:  
☐ Short-term parental placement/employment outside the UK  
☐ A need to leave the UK for a specific complex family need such as:  
o death of a relative;  
o care for a sick relative;  
o sibling or parent receiving medical treatment outside NI; or  
o attend to immigration matters.
- L** Late but present. Always completed by the Referral Room.
- M** This should be used where a pupil is given permission to be out of school for **part of the school day** and has been marked absent at either am or pm registration. It cannot be used to cover a full day's absence.(Medical)

- N** This is a **TEMPORARY CODE**. If a pupil is absent code N is used **until** a note is brought into school by the pupil. **Code N should then be changed to a more relevant code**. Do not leave absence as Code N permanently. This code must be updated.
- O** This code should **for Other exceptional circumstances** e.g. wedding of an immediate family member, court appearance, Young Carers absence, heavy snow.
- P** This code should be used when pupils are absent in order to attend an **Approved sporting activity** organised events organised by the school or **as a representative at country, provincial or international level**.

**For the academic year 2020, this code will also be used to code Covid related absences as outline earlier in this document.**

- R** **Religious observance** - This code should only be used for a pupil who is a Sponsor at Confirmation. It is **NOT** to be used when a pupil is attending a funeral.
- S** Study Leave. This should not be used by the form teacher or tutor.
- V** This code is used for Approved Educational Activity e.g. school trips, residential trips, academic interview linked with future education.
- W** Work Experience arranged by the school.

**Code 1** Alternative Educational provision organised by ELB (EOTAS, Tullymore, Links)

**Code 2** Home.hospital tuition organised by ELB

**Code 3** Elective Home Education

**Code 4** Pupil Referral Unit approved by ELB (Tullymore, Links)

**Code 5** Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework)

**Code 6** Training Organisation (under Entitlement Framework)

**Code 7** Further Education (FE) College (under Entitlement Framework)

**Code 8** Intensive Support Learning Unit (Groomsport ISLU or Glenmona)

**Code 9** CAMHS (Beechcroft, Regional Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service)

<b>APPROVALS</b>	
<b>Principal:</b>	
<b>Chair of the Board of Governors:</b>	
<b>Date of Approval by Governors:</b>	
<b>Date of next annual review:</b>	