



SARK SCHOOL

## **Attendance Policy**

It is our belief that good attendance and punctuality is at the heart of a child's progress and is, therefore, fundamental to our school's success.

Sark School greatly appreciates parental support to reduce the total amount of days lost due to holidays or lateness. The School is committed to working in partnership with parents to enable all children to reach their academic potential and to support their social development and for this to happen individual attendance needs to be as high as possible and we all need to play our part.

Children are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have and we will endeavour to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support regular attendance. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children.

There is a relationship between the attendance of pupils and their development, attainment and progress. The school is committed to promoting good attendance as part of its dedication to ensure quality educational provision to give its pupils the best start in life.

Across one school year:

- Less than 5 days absence = 97.3% attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 92.6% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 89.4% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 84.2% attendance

If a child achieves 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 39 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

The Head of School will ensure that the Board of Governor's objectives are met by the effective management of attendance and report to the governing body in relation to this. Managing attendance will include: evaluating whole-school data, surfacing trends, and attendance of defined groups, to enable planning of possible interventions; and considering individual cases of concern, to determine any appropriate interventions.

School staff are responsible to ensure they promote the school's ethos, set an example of attendance and punctuality and enable the school to keep accurate records of attendance for individual students.



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Parents/Carers have a responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.

Pupils have the responsibility to be on time for lessons and ready to learn.

The purpose of this policy is to inform all members of our school community of the following:

- School attendance and the Law;
- How the school encourages and enables good attendance;
- How the school monitors and reviews attendance;
- How the school monitors punctuality and lateness;
- Authorised and unauthorised absences;
- Leave of absence in term time;
- Why attendance and punctuality matter.

### **Education (Sark) Ordinance 2003**

“It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of compulsory school age to cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and to any special educational needs which he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”

“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at the School fails to attend regularly thereat, the parent of the child shall be guilty of an offence and liable upon conviction in the case of a first offence to a fine not exceeding level 1 on the Sark uniform scale and in the case of a second or subsequent offence to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the Sark uniform scale or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month or to both such fine and such imprisonment.”

### **Encouraging and enabling good attendance**

The most vital part of encouraging good attendance is to ensure that the school is a place to which the children want to come: that the school is a place where the children are treated with respect and feel valued; a place where their needs are recognised and are being addressed; a place where all children can experience success within a rich, relevant and diversified curriculum.

It is clear that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. From the outset, parents are encouraged to take an active interest in the work of the School and to build and support their children’s enthusiasm for attending school.



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All staff make children aware of the importance of good attendance and children are praised.

Each child's ongoing annual attendance record is shared with the parents, as part of termly written reports. It follows that individual records of attendance are kept on file and are passed onto subsequent schools.

### **Monitoring and reviewing attendance**

The school will log conversations with parents about attendance to assist in the monitoring of attendance and the offering of support.

In keeping with best practice in the UK, Sark School takes a morning and afternoon register and we record the attendance or absence of every pupil. The school will ensure that its staff receive appropriate training and support to appropriately use attendance codes in line with the UK's DfE guidance and best practice.

To enable the appropriate coding of attendance or the authorisation of absence, the school may request additional information or evidence, eg. in relation to medical appointments or illness. (Medical evidence may include: an appointment letter, a GP appointment card signed / stamped by a receptionist, a prescription, prescribed medication.)

Regular checks on attendance are carried out by all class teachers. The Attendance Registers are marked twice each day, at the start of the morning session and again in the afternoon. Registers are checked by the Head of School on a regular basis.

All absences and persistent lateness are investigated. When the register closes, the school teachers or secretary will attempt to call home twice if a parent has failed to contact the school regarding their child's absence by 8.45am.

Attendance data is held in paper format for two years from the end of the academic year.

The Head of School monitors the attendance of pupils each half term. The approach appended outlines the school's approach for monitoring and enabling attendance.

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Sark School recognises the importance of regular attendance and it is a requirement for the Head of School to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised. The final decision is made by the Head of School.



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Wherever possible parents are expected to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time. Proof of appointment can be sought by the Head of School.

If a child is absent from school for any reason the parent/carer must inform the school in person, in writing or by telephone as soon as possible of absence and the reason for it. Such calls are always logged and the class teacher informed. We respectfully request that parents communicate with us on a daily basis regarding pupil absence. If we have not received a message by 8.45am, we will call every day.

Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school received no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given.

### **Punctuality and lateness**

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start at the start of the school day. The Head of School monitors lateness of pupils as punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is of extreme importance therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

Children may arrive at school from 8.15am. Registration is called at 8.30 am and again at 1pm for all classes. Registers will close at these times. A pupil that arrives after this time will be marked as 'late' unless the school has previously acknowledged the reason for their late arrival into school.

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will initially make verbal contact with parents/carers. If the concerns persist, and a pupil is late more than three times in a year, the Head of School will write to the parents/carers.

If there is no improvement, the Board of Governors will be informed and will write to the parents, inviting them to a meeting with the Head of School and the Chair of the board of Governors.

If there continues to be no improvement, the Board of Govenrors will inform the Education Committee who may choose to raise a school attendance order, in accordance with Sark Law.

### **Children missing from education**

Where a pupil has 3 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will contact the Island's Safeguarding Officer.



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Reasonable steps to be taken by school staff include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts (parents are asked to provide a minimum of two emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and also for other emergency purposes);
- Letters home (including recorded delivery);
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts;
- Home visits.

All contacts and outcomes to be recorded on the pupil's file.



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## **Term Time Absence**

Sark School does not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are ‘exceptional circumstances’. Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time.

The Head of School shall not grant any leave of absence during term time unless they consider that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Head of School must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

The Head of School will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.

Applications for leave of absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in further action against the parent, in accordance with the terms laid out in Sark’s Education Ordinance.

Applications for leave of absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised” should the pupil be absent from school during the same dates. This may result in further action against the parent, in accordance with the terms laid out in Sark’s Education Ordinance if the child is absent from school during that period.

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a leave of absence will be referred to the Board of Governors and the Education Committee who may impose further sanctions, as detailed in the Education (Sark) Ordinance 2003.

### **How do I request permission for an absence during term time?**

You must submit a request to the school before you arrange for your child to have time away.

If you wish to take your child out of school during term time, you should speak to your child’s teacher and submit a formal request to the Head of School via the school office, using the school’s Leave of Absence form.

The Head of School will then consider whether to give permission for the absence.

### **When will absence requests be granted?**



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Permission for absence will only be granted in *exceptional circumstances*.

The Head of School will consider each absence request individually and decide whether to grant the absence.

The Head of School will also decide how many days your child can be away from school if the absence is granted.

### **What are ‘exceptional circumstances’?**

It is at the school’s discretion to decide which circumstances are ‘exceptional’.

Examples of circumstances that are not exceptional may include:

- holidays taken in term time because of lower costs or parental work commitments;
- absence that coincides with important school events, such as the start of term or exams.

Examples of exceptional circumstances may include:

- The funeral of a parent, grandparent or sibling;
- Sudden loss of housing;
- Weddings of parents and siblings.

Before authorising an absence the head of School will consider:

- the impact on the pupil’s progress;
- the pupil’s annual attendance rate;
- whether the period of absence falls during any tests or exam periods.

### **Why is it important?**

Missing a week of school for a holiday might not seem like very much, but it can have a big effect on your child’s education.

For example, if your child misses two weeks of school every year, this adds up to more than two terms over the child’s whole time in school.

Making sure your child attends school as much as possible means:

- your child will have the same education and opportunities as everyone else in the class;
- you won’t need to worry about catching up on work, or that your child might fall behind;
- your child won’t miss out on activities at the start and end of term, which are often fun and a chance to develop friendships.

### **What if I take my child on an unauthorised absence?**

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If you take your child out of school without advance permission (except where he or she is unwell), the Education Committee of Chief Pleas will be informed by the Board of Governors who may serve you with a School Attendance Order, as enshrined in Sark Law.

Sark's Education Ordinance details the duty of parents to secure regular attendance of registered pupils:

If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at the School fails to attend regularly thereat, the parent of the child shall be guilty of an offence and liable upon conviction in the case of a first offence to a fine not exceeding level 1 on the Sark uniform scale and in the case of a second or subsequent offence to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the Sark uniform scale or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

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