

*St Thomas More Catholic Primary
School*



**Attendance Policy
October 2021**

This Policy operates in accordance with the framework and advice contained within the Medway guidance on achieving and maintaining high attendance, which the school and its Governing Body intend to follow.

AAP – Attendance Advisory Practitioners.

SIMS – School Information Management System

Dfe – Department for Education.

N.B The term ‘parent’ should also be taken to mean the person with day-to-day care responsibilities.

Principles

- Regular and full time attendance is essential if children and young people are to benefit fully from their school life
- It is important that children learn the importance of being punctual as part of their preparation for adult life
- It is the parents responsibility to contact the school on the first day of an absence
- The school and parents should work together in order to achieve high standards of attendance and punctuality
- In law it is only the Head teacher that may authorise a child’s absence from school

Purpose

- The purpose of this Policy is to set out the ways by which attendance and punctuality are managed by the school and to clarify the role of the parents/carer

The School will:

- Give attendance and punctuality a high priority;
- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe, and know that their presence is valued;
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality, using newsletters and other communications to parents;
- Encourage parents to fully support the policy as a vital contribution towards their child’s education;
- Encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life;
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored, using a computer based registration system, and absences are followed up promptly;
- ▪ communicate effectively with other agencies (Traveller Education, Health, Social Services etc);
- Meet the legal requirements with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence;
- Ensure that all staff comply with the school policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality;
- Ensure information is available for Governors and parents; ▪ ensure good liaison where a change of school occurs;

- Develop incentives for good attendance and punctuality;
- Share good practice with other schools;
- Have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence.

Strategies to Promote and Maintain High Standards of Attendance and Punctuality

- All new parents are introduced to the Policy and information on attendance in the School Prospectus. It is also accessible on the school website.
- The newsletter is used as a vehicle to promote this aspect of school life and serves as a reminder.
- Individual parents are approached where there is concern about their child's attendance or punctuality.
- Maintain and promote a set of class rules, which refer to punctuality and readiness for work.
- Reward classes children and groups of children for high attendance.
- Maintain up to date records within the SIMS system.
- Liaise with the AAP during regular monitoring visits to identify attendance concerns.

We expect the parent to:

- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address;
- Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first day of the absence;
- Telephone the school after the first day of absence to advise the school if the absence is continuing;
- On the 3rd day of absence, medical evidence will be required;
- In cases of lengthy absence, keep the school well informed so that work can be sent home in certain cases and in order for the school to be prepared for the child's return;
- Provide a note indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen;
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day;
- Let the school know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down; if an urgent appointment has been made;
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child.

Registers

The method of maintaining the class registers is through the SIMS Attendance Module. Class teachers complete a registration sheet twice daily and return it to the office.

Weekly absence reports are printed and reasons for absence recorded using the relevant codes.

M	Medical or Dental appointments authorised
I	Illness authorised
L	Late before registers closed authorised

U	Late after registers close unauthorised
C	Other authorised circumstances (exceptional) authorised
H	Family holiday authorised
G	Family holiday not agreed unauthorised
N	No reason yet provided for absence unauthorised
V	Educational visit or trip authorised
R	Religious activities authorised
E	Exclusion authorised
O	Unauthorised absence not covered by above unauthorised

Registers close at 9:20 a.m. Lateness after this time is classed an unauthorised absence unless it is for a medical appointment or a reason is provided which can be authorised by the Headteacher.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Absences can be authorised if they are for certain reasons e.g. sickness, absence following the death of a close member of the family, attendance at an interview or examination, participation in a regional or national sporting event or an approved holiday (see below).

The ultimate responsibility to authorise absence rests with the Headteacher. If the Headteacher is not satisfied with the reasons provided, the absence may be categorised as unauthorised.

An absence will be classified as unauthorised when:

- a child is kept off school because a parent is ill;
- a child is absent because a sibling is ill;
- the parent cannot get the child to school;
- the child is taken on a shopping trip;
- the child is absent due to a birthday treat/family treat;
- a child is absent due to family work patterns;
- the child refuses to come to school or wants to stay at home;
- a child is more than half an hour late without a satisfactory explanation.

Each child's unauthorised absences (including unauthorised holiday absences) will be noted and recorded on an annual report to parents.

It is a legal requirement for a school to report percentages of authorised and unauthorised absences to parents in the annual Governors Report and to the DfE.

Parents have a responsibility to telephone the school if their child is ill. If a child needs to be absent for a medical appointment a note must be received by the school before the appointment. When a child returns from a period of absence due to a sickness, a note must be provided.

The school will text the prime parent on the first day of absence if we have not received notification of the absence before the registers close. If we do not receive a message explaining the absence we will then call the child's home to enquire about the absence.

If a child has been absent without an explanation, parents will be sent a letter. Should this still result in a nil response, the absence will be marked unauthorised and the school will inform the AAP about the child's lack of attendance.

Where there is cause for concern, i.e. when attendance is below 90% in any term, the reasons for this will be investigated and where appropriate, discussed with the AAP during one of their regular visits.

Not attending in circumstances relating to Corona Virus

In line with government guidance, any pupil not attending in circumstances relating to corona virus will be coded as X, this will also include the following circumstances;

- If they are experiencing symptoms of corona virus. In this instance they will be coded as X until the result of their test is returned. If the result is positive, they must self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms and will be coded X for the duration. If the test is negative the pupil should return to school and will be coded X for the days of absence whilst awaiting the test result. If the pupil remains unwell with sickness other than corona virus, then the relevant, standard absence code will be applied.
- If they are required to quarantine for 14 days after arrival in or return to the UK from any country not currently on the Government produced exemption list. The student will be coded X for the duration.
- If the pupil or a family member receives a letter from the authorities stating that they are required to shield due to rising infection rates in the area. The pupil will be coded X for the duration of their absence.

Local lockdown

If rates of the disease rise locally, we may need to prevent some pupils from attending. In this instance we will receive national and local government guidance on what measures are necessary in the event of local lockdown. Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' - code X - will be used for those pupils who are asked not to attend.

Remote education

If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID19), they will be offered access to remote education. We will keep a record of, and monitor engagement with this activity.

Requests for Leave of absence

It should be noted that leave during term time is only granted in exceptional circumstances.

Parents are asked to support St Thomas More Catholic Primary with its aims and not to take their children away from school during term time. Requests for leave must be

made in writing. Please be aware if your child's attendance falls below the government recommended guidelines of 96% for both the current and previous academic year, the request for leave of absence even in extenuating circumstances may not be granted.

Upon receipt of the written request, the Headteacher will make a decision. The exceptional circumstances must be made clear to the Headteacher in the written request. Parents are asked to reflect on the possible impact that this time out of school will have on their child's learning when requesting such authorisation. Please also bear in mind that significant periods of absence can impact on a child's social relationships and affect friendship patterns.

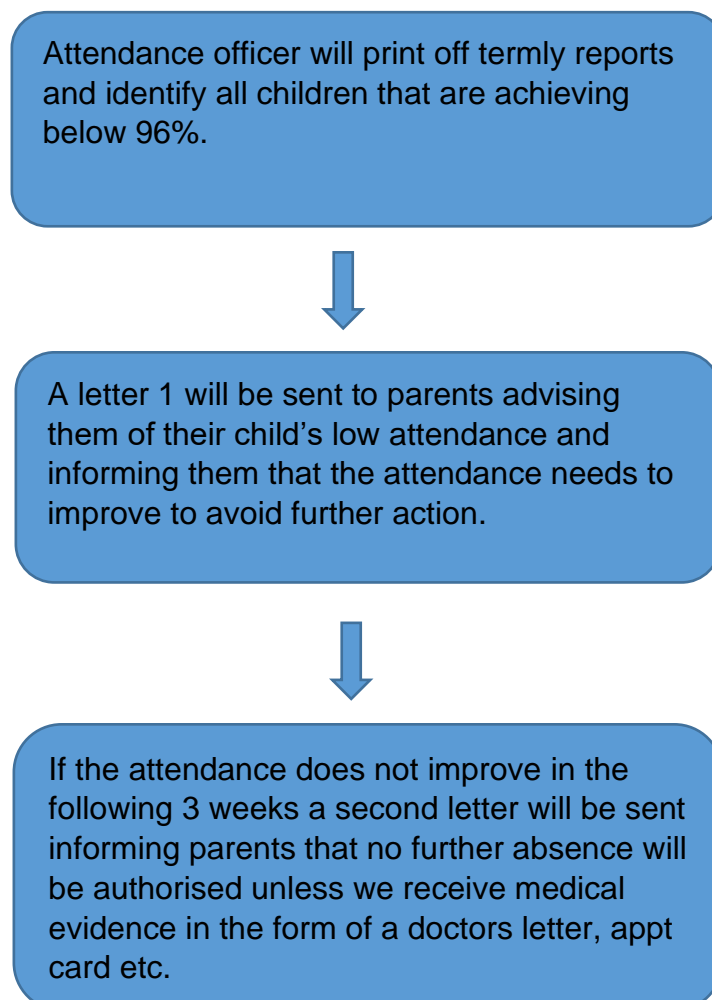
Parents have no right to demand that absences are authorised. (Regulation 8 of the Education Regulations 1995 applies).

Parents of children in Year 6 should note that absences will not be authorised during preparation for and administration of the Key Stage 2 SATs.

If a pupil goes on holiday without permission from the Headteacher, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and the AAP will be informed.

Where a child does not attend school for more than 20 school days and it is established that they are living in another area or that they have left the country, the school in conjunction with the local authority will remove that child's name from their school roll.

STM stages of Attendance monitoring





If the child's attendance continues to fall the parents/guardian will be sent a letter inviting them to an attendance meeting with our AAP in school.



If no improvements are seen the school will refer the parents/Guardians to the Attendance Advisory Service and a penalty notice may be issued resulting in a £60 fine, increasing to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice within 28 days will result in a court prosecution for your child's irregular school attendance.

Sanctions where absences are unauthorised....

- In the early stages an Attendance Advisory Practitioner might form the opinion that the serving of a Penalty Notice is appropriate e.g. a parent fails to provide an explanation for their child's absence in accordance with the school procedures and absence is recorded as unauthorised in the register of least 10 sessions in any previous six week period.

With immediate effect, we will be issuing penalty notices for 10 or more unauthorised absences within a six week period. This will be school weeks only.

- Referral can be made to the AAP, where legal sanctions may be applied, in the usual manner.
- Where 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) occur, the school can apply to the LEA for the issuing of a Penalty Notice.
- This application would be made after consultation with the AAP. Payment of Penalty Notices discharges liability for prosecution for the offence to which the Penalty Notice relates (ss44A (2) AND (4) of the Education Act 1996 as inserted by s23 of the AntiSocial Behaviour Act 2003). This means that neither the fact that a Penalty Notice was issued and paid nor the pattern of unauthorised absence to which a paid notice relates can be submitted as evidence in a prosecution for any subsequent offence. In circumstances where the Penalty Notice is not paid, Medway Council may use the fact that a notice was issued and unpaid as evidence

in a subsequent prosecution and the unauthorised absence for which the penalty notice was issued can be used in evidence in the usual way.

- The offence of non-school attendance is absolute, and the legal requirement regarding evidence is simply that the child did not attend.
- £120 fine for each adult / carer in the household if paid within 28 days. £60 each for each adult / carer in the household if paid within 21 days.

Failure to pay will result in a summons to the magistrate court.

Punctuality

The school day begins at 8.40a.m. and the register will be taken at 8.50am. Children arriving after 8.50 but before 9.30am will be coded L (Late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register. Children arriving after 9.30am will be marked U (late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole morning session.

If parents know their child is going to be late for any reason, they should let the school know.

Parents of children who persistently arrive late will be approached and reminded of these times and their obligation to comply with them. It will be explained that the lateness not only interrupts their child's education, but also that of others in the class.

Repeated, unexplained lateness or persistent lateness without an acceptable reason will be referred to the APP and/or Social Services where relevant.

If a regular pattern of lateness is observed, a note will be sent home asking the parent to explain the lateness or to ensure that punctuality is maintained. In rare circumstances where the school is made aware of a situation, an arrangement allowing a degree of flexibility can be agreed with the Headteacher.

Medical Appointments

Parents must sign their child(ren) out and back in again when attending appointments during the school day. A log is kept for the purpose. Parents should come to the office, where the office staff will contact the classroom and ask that the child comes down to reception to meet their parent/carer.

If a child has an appointment in a morning or afternoon session and does not attend school for the other session, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless it has been agreed with the Headteacher.

Leavers and children who cease to attend without prior notice (CME) procedures

Parents must inform the school in writing if they are planning to remove their child from St Thomas More Catholic Primary School. This must include the details of the new school the child is planning to attend or that they are exercising their right to educate their child otherwise. All Education Otherwise information will be passed into the Inclusions Team at Medway Council, who are responsible for monitoring all children who are educated otherwise. If after ten day's continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details

to the Local Authority, in order to perform further checks that are not available to school.

Vulnerable Children

Children who are Looked After (LAC) subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Children in Need (CHiN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Officer. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home. Any outside professionals who are also working with the children and family will also be notified of the absence (Social Worker, AAP etc). Children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

Monitoring

The Headteacher will keep the Governors informed about attendance matters.

All staff will be expected to comply with the policy and any issues will be discussed at staff business briefings.

The School has regular meetings with the AAP to discuss concerns and review absence data.

Reviewed: October 2021

Next Review Date: October 2024