

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, our Attendance Policy reflects our strong belief that all children have entitlement to a broad and varied education and experiences in a caring and safe environment, which reflects the values and beliefs of our Catholic faith. We see ourselves as a loving, supportive and happy community following Christ's way, educating children and adults to develop their talents and share them for the good of others. We believe that, together with parents, we are at the foundations of our children's future.

Regular and full-time attendance is essential if children 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. The school and parents, will work together in order to achieve high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)

➤ [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

➤ [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports and reporting concerns to the headteacher and senior leaders
- Working with the attendance advisory practitioners to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis (morning and afternoon), using the correct codes, and submitting this information using the electronic register.

School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the pastoral manager in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 10am on the first day of the absence with a reason as to why they will be absent and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide medical evidence on the 3rd day of absence
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Provide a note indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen
- Inform the school if their child is going to be late e.g. if a car breaks down; if an urgent appointment has been made

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

Recording attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register using our BromCom Attendance Module.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Morning Session		Afternoon Session	
8:40am	Gates open	1:15pm	Registration
8:55am	Registration in class	1:40pm	Any child who arrives after 1:15pm but before 1:40pm will be recorded as late (Code L)
9:00am	Registration closes (any child who arrives after registration has finished but before 9:30am will be recorded as late - Code L)	1:40pm	Any child arriving after 1:40pm will be recorded as Code U (late after register closes)
After 9:30am	Any child arriving after 9:30am will be recorded as Code U (late after register closes)	3:15pm	End of school day

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 10:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office.

If a child does not attend school, the parent/carer must contact the school explaining why the child is absent by 10am
parent@st-thomasmore.medway.sch.uk
01634 864701



School is not made aware of the absence by 10am. A member of the office staff will text the parent/carer asking them to contact the office.

Day 3 of absence – The parent/carer must provide medical evidence as to why the child is still absent from school

School does not receive a response to the text. A member of the office staff will telephone and email the parent/carer asking them to contact the office with reasons as to why the child is absent.

School does not receive evidence or has concerns it will be unauthorised. The Headteacher will contact the Attendance Advisory Practitioner.

School still do not hear from a parent/carer as to why their child is absence. The office member will report to the Pastoral Manager. The office/Pastoral Manager will continue to attempt to make contact throughout the day and the next day. If there are safeguarding concerns, a social worker or early help worker from Children's Services will be contacted to inform them of the absence. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Parent/carer of a child with persistent absences will be invited to attend an attendance clinic with the Attendance Advisory Practitioner and member of the senior leadership team

A parent/carer fails to inform the school by the 3rd day. The Pastoral Manager and another member of staff will visit the home.

Failure to improve attendance will result in a referral to the Attendance Advisory Practitioner which could lead to prosecution. It could also lead to a referral to Medway's Children Services.

A parent/carer is not at the home address. The Headteacher will be informed and relevant action will be taken. This may result in contacting the Attendance Advisory Practitioner, the Police or Children's Services.

If you would like further support with your child's attendance or punctuality, please contact the school and ask to speak to our Pastoral Manager so that we can work together. You can contact us for more information by emailing aassa@medway.gov.uk or by phoning 01634 337 310. Find out more about school attendance on GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or repeat occasions can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns and therefore, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, will work together with other professionals such as the Attendance Advisory Practitioners, Social Workers and Early Help Coordinators to raise any concerns and seek further support.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 3 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence via email to the school office or telephone. Requests for holiday absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- Children who are persistently late may be reported to the Attendance Advisory Practitioner

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Text the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If we do not hear from the parents we will call all emergency contacts. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may visit the home.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving Medway's Children's Services, the Attendance Advisory Practitioner or the Police.

Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels via attendance letters, telephone calls home and end of year reports.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as one off events which are unavoidable, examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

Penalty notices will go directly to the parent/carer the child resides with.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Strategies for promoting attendance

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School will encourage school attendance by providing an engaging, broad and balanced curriculum, an ethos where children feel loved in a place of care, kindness and happiness where children want to come to school. Weekly attendance and punctuation awards with a 'Punctuality Peacock' and an 'Anteater Attendance' mascot, termly celebration certificates for attendance and end of year school reports. Regular information on the school newsletter will keep parents/carers up to date with the impact of absences on academic, growth and developmental progress and regular communication with the Pastoral Manager and Attendance Officer to support parents/carers who may have difficulties. St Thomas More Catholic Primary School also engages the wider community by inviting parents/carers into school for 'Bring Your Parent/Grandparent to...' sessions, coffee mornings and parent workshops.

Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern or require support
- Meet termly with the school's Attendance Advisory Practitioner to seek advice where necessary
- Communicate with social workers and early help workers

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families

- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection policy
- Behaviour, Relationships & Anti-Bullying policy

<https://st-thomasmore.medway.sch.uk/key-information/policies-documents/>

Reviewed Date: September 2023

Next Review Date: September 2024

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement
Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made

H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to	School site is closed, there is disruption to

	exceptional circumstances	travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day