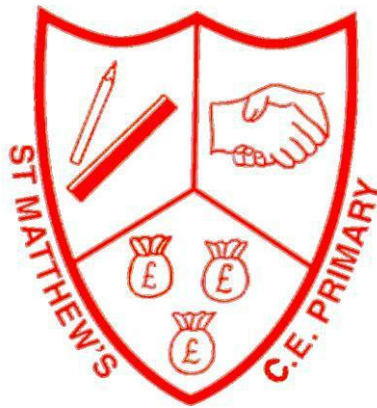


ST. MATTHEW'S C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Signed: Chairman of Governors:

Headteacher:

Reviewed: September 2017
Date of next review: September 2019

MISSION STATEMENT

“St. Matthew’s C.E. Primary School is dedicated to providing an education which enables every child to fulfil his/her best potential. It seeks to promote academic, emotional and spiritual growth in a Christian environment, welcoming children drawn from diverse cultures”.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This document includes:

Attendance policy procedures
Punctuality procedures
Authorised/Unauthorised absences
Holidays in term time
Roles & responsibilities for attendance matters in this school
Flowcharts – Primary school pathways for attendance issues
Application for absence from school – Holiday/Extended leave
Penalty notices – Information for parents and carers

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

AUTHORISED & UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

In every instance it is the Headteacher who determines whether an absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. This decision is made based on information provided by parents/carers. However, because the register is a legal document, the Headteacher has a responsibility to ensure that it is completed accurately and in accordance with current guidance. For this reason, it is not sufficient for an absence to be recorded as authorised based entirely on information provided by parents/carers.

Examples of authorised absence:

Medical or emergency dental appointments
(Notification of appointments needs to be given in advance where possible. Copies of appointment cards/letters need to be shown to office staff to confirm the appointment and for authorisation to be given. Office staff will confirm that appointment cards/letters have been seen and record in the appointment book which is located in the school office.

Illness

Religious festival

Examples of unauthorised absence:

- Hair appointment
- Wedding
- Holidays during term-time

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school time unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed.
- Shopping, looking after other children, birthdays, collecting relatives from the airport, weddings (other than their own parents)
- Day trips and holidays in term time

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school, it is better to speak to our Attendance Co-ordinator, Mrs Naik, in school to resolve the issue rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

RECORDING OF ABSENCES

The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register. Where they are not certain whether an absence is authorised or not they should seek advice from the Headteacher.

The school office is responsible for maintaining records of reason and length of absence.

Parents/carers are requested to contact the school office or class teacher on the first day of absence, advising of the reason for the absence and expected return date, if known.

Where information is provided to the class teacher, they are responsible for passing this information to the school office.

Where a verbal message is taken, this should be recorded on the school pro-forma and a copy forwarded to the class teacher.

Where the absence is for several days, the parent/carer is responsible for informing the school office of the continued absence

and updating them as to the reason for the absence on a regular basis. Medical evidence will be asked for at this point.

If a child is absent and no contact has been made by the family, the school office will contact the family on the first day of absence. If contact cannot be made, the Headteacher should be informed and in the case of prolonged or repeated absence without justification being given, the Headteacher will determine whether the Local Authority School Attendance Team (Pupil Attendance Support Team PAST) should be advised.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold we will be given priority consideration and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

PA cases may be referred to the Local Authority School Attendance Team (Pupil Attendance Support Team PAST) when school has exhausted all their attempts to reduce the absenteeism.

REGISTRATION

Morning registration is between 8.55am and 9.05am.

Afternoon registration is between 1.00pm and 1.35pm depending on the year group that they are in.

Each class teacher or their nominated representative is responsible for marking children present the register at morning and afternoon registration. The registers must be completed by 9.30am and 1.35pm to avoid discrepancies between classes. The class teacher must ensure that the marked register, plus any notes received regarding absence is returned to the school office by 9.30am/1.35pm.

The school office is responsible for entering attendance on the electronic register and for inputting absence codes on a daily basis.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

If your child is absent you must:

Contact us by 9.30am on the first day of absence, either by telephone or you can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent, we will:

Send a text message to you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.

Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Lead, Mrs. Naik or the Headteacher.

Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team (Pupil Attendance Support Team PAST) where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol.

LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

HOW WE MANAGE LATENESS

The school starts at 8.55am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by 9.05am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Pupils requiring admittance to the school after 8.55am must go to the front door and request entry via the school office.

In accordance with current guidance, the attendance registers are closed at 9.30am. This means that any pupil who arrives after the registration period (9.00am – 9.05am), but before the registers are closed (9.30am) will be given a late mark (L) in the register. This code is classed as a present mark, but displays that the pupil arrived late for school. Any pupil who arrives after the registers have closed (9.30am), but before the end of the morning session will be given a “late after registers closed” mark (U) in the register. This code is classed as an unauthorised absence, but displays that the pupil was physically present in school for part of the session.

The fact that the “U” code is classed as an unauthorised absence and means that when it is used, pupils are likely to be missing significant amounts of schooling; putting their educational progress at risk. For this reason, the use of this code will be considered as seriously as any other unauthorised absence and will attract the interest of external agencies, including

consideration of the use of legal sanctions, in just the same way. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We also offer a walking bus and breakfast club – if you would like more information please call at the school office.

IN-SCHOOL STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE/PUNCTUALITY

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

Meetings in school between parents, pupils, Learning Mentors, Attendance Officer and the Headteacher

Fixed Penalty notices.

“Aiming High for Attendance” scheme, which encourages all children to strive for 100% attendance, using visual resources.

“Attendance & Punctuality Slideshows” which encourage a team spirit as well as individual responsibility.

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE TEAM (PUPIL ATTENDANCE SUPPORT TEAM - PAST)

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). They will try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist, the case may be referred to the Court Officers who can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

SIGNING OUT

The school office is responsible for overseeing the procedure for releasing children where parents/carers have requested and been granted authorised absence for an appointment in school time.

The child(ren) can only be released to a parent or authorised carer/family member (normally to be authorised in writing by the legal guardian of the child). When an authorised adult is picking up a child within school time, the school office is responsible for ensuring that they complete the electronic signing in/out process.

This contains details of names, class, time admitted/time released, reason for lateness/absence and supervising adult (for signing in/out).

HOLIDAYS/EXTENDED LEAVE IN TERM TIME

St. Matthew's C.E. Primary School discourages the taking of holidays in term time. All extended holidays will be unauthorised. However, the Governors have agreed that the Headteacher may approve one holiday per school career of up to 5 days during term time in extremely special circumstances on receipt of a prior request from the parent with whom the child usually resides, unless the request is considered inappropriate.

A request will be considered inappropriate if:

The child is in Year 2 or Year 6 (holiday request for pupils in Year 2 and 6 may be considered after SATs testing has been completed).
It is during, or directly prior to testing weeks in Years 1, 3, 4 & 5.
There are existing or historic attendance concerns.
It is thought that the child's education progress would be put at significant risk as a result of being absent from school (e.g. where a child has a statement of special educational needs).

A HOLIDAY WILL NOT BE AUTHORISED WHERE A CHILD IS ALREADY A PERSISTENT ABSENTEE OR WOULD BECOME SO AS A RESULT OF THE LEAVE BEING TAKEN.

A persistent absentee has an attendance of 85% or below.

In extremely exceptional cases a period of extended leave beyond 5 days may be agreed by the Headteacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors.

EXTENDED LEAVE IN TERM TIME

In September 2014 the Department for Education removed the Headteacher's discretionary powers to authorise absences in 'exceptional circumstances'. They also stated that from then on, all leave during term time is unauthorised.

Please note that absences equal to or longer than 10 sessions (5 school days) will be put forward for a fixed penalty notice to Lancashire County Council.

Parents will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss their application for absence during term time.

RELIGIOUS ABSENCE

One school day will be authorised to observe a religious festival, for example, Eid, Diwali.

ALTERNATIVE CURRICULAR ARRANGEMENTS

If school is notified that a pupil will be absent for an extended period the Headteacher will liaise with the family and other support services to determine how the pupil can maintain their educational progress.

COMMUNICATION OF ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

It is important that the School's Policy on Attendance is communicated to all the stakeholders and that parents, pupils and staff know the procedures and systems that are in place to implement it.

The Governors have determined that:

The Attendance Policy will be placed on the school website, together with a summary of the procedure for requesting absence, holidays in term time and signing in and out of school.

Details of the Policy and the procedure for requesting a leave of absence during term time and signing in and out of school will be disseminated as part of the new parent induction process, e.g. induction package, talks to new parents.

Reference to the School Attendance Policy regarding term-time absences (including holidays) is to be made clear when the school calendar of dates is sent out each year.

Summary of Responsibilities under the Attendance Policy and Procedures.

The Headteacher will provide a summary of attendance and causes for concern termly to Governors.

Details of the absence record of the school will be communicated as part of the school profile.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. We regularly use a text messaging service to communicate with parents. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. At the end of each term we will send home your child's registration certificate. It will be colour coded – green, amber and red.

Our target is to achieve better than this, however, because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in the school newsletter. We thank you for your continued support.

SUMMARY

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Date of policy: September 2017

Date review due: September 2019