



# Attendance and Unauthorised Leave Policy

## July 2019

Review date: July 2020

### Mission Statement

*As Servants of God, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Through His love, we guide each member of our family on their own spiritual and learning journey to achieve and grow.”*

***We Love, We Learn, We Live with Christ***

Signed by Chair.....  
Written by V.Ryder (Learning Mentor)

Date.....

# **Attendance and Unauthorised Leave Policy**

## **Foreword**

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential.

Our expectation is that every child who is on roll should attend school every day, when the school is in session as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is developing positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

At St Thomas More RC Primary School, we use the SIMS Attendance Module to register children, monitor individual children's patterns and analyse attendance data.

## **1. Working Together to Promote Regular Attendance**

Non-attendance at school is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, we recognise that each case is different and that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategy to apply. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility, but we encourage parents to approach school if they experience any difficulties with attendance and punctuality, so that we can offer our support.

Our aim is to work closely with parents, staff and children to promote good attendance and this policy explains the ways in which we do this. Parents agree to this working relationship once their child enrolls at St Thomas More.

We use a number of incentives to encourage regular attendance at school, though we highlight that the prime benefit derived from regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured.

- *Weekly Incentives* – Assemblies that celebrate the class with the best attendance and the class receive a reward.
- *Annual Incentives* – Children who achieve 100% attendance over the course of a whole year are awarded a certificate and a gold badge and are invited to take part in a reward activity.
- *Individual Incentives* – Staff will work collaboratively with parents and children to tailor a package of support, which meets the needs of individual children whose attendance has become a concern.

In cases where improvement in attendance or punctuality is required, we may:

- Report to you when your child's attendance/punctuality is causing a concern either in writing or verbally.
- Invite you to an Attendance Panel to discuss these concerns with the Headteacher, Pastoral Manager, or in some cases the Education Welfare Officer.
- Make a referral to the Education Welfare Service for further intervention and support.
- Submit a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine (see section 2) to the Education Welfare Service.
- Submit a Fast Track to Court referral to the Education Welfare Service.

## 2. Understanding Absence

### **Punctuality & Registration**

Regular monitoring will take place by the Senior Leadership Team and the

#### **'Improving Attendance Action Plan.'**

Governors will also monitor attendance through the termly Head teacher report.

We welcome children into school at 8.40am daily, to encourage a calm start to the day.

Each school day is made of two sessions - AM and PM.

Registration is taken at each of these sessions from:

8.40 - 8.50am EYFS, KS1 & KS2

1:00pm EYFS & KS1

1:30pm KS2

Children are expected to be present in the classroom and ready to learn by these times.

- Registers are kept electronically at St Thomas More R.C. Primary and are monitored daily by the attendance officers.
- Details of all absences and lateness are recorded. The Inclusion Team and Senior Staff monitor the main entrance every morning and record the number of pupils who are arriving after school starts at 8.50am
- Children arriving after the close of registers at 8:50am will be required to sign their children into school using the Inventory system situated at the main office.
- The Attendance Officers and Senior Staff monitor the pupils who are absent on a daily basis and use a range of strategies to reduce individual pupil attendance.
- A log is kept of all texts and telephone correspondence between parents and school.
- We will use a variety of letters to ensure that we keep parents/carers informed of any concerns.
- We promote positive school attendance.

### **Authorised/Unauthorised – The Definition**

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone.

#### *Authorised Absence*

Authorised absences are when a child is absent from school for a morning/afternoon/full day and school deems the reason for this absence as acceptable. Only the Head teacher can make the final decision as to whether an absence is authorised.

#### *Unauthorised Absence*

Unauthorised absences are those which are unexplained by parents, which the school does not consider 'reasonable' or the Head teacher has not given permission for.

This includes:

- ✚ Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily (e.g. shopping, looking after other children, absences when parents are ill, birthdays)
- ✚ Truancy before or during the school day.
- ✚ Absences that have never been properly explained.
- ✚ Holidays during term time.

## Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is absent, it is a parent's responsibility to contact the school before 9.30am on the first day of absence, informing of the reason for absence.

As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, if no reason for absence has been received, we will attempt to contact the parent or carer and all other emergency contacts. This may be done by text message or telephone call.

- + Parents have a duty to provide more than one emergency contact for their child's record.
- + Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If regular medical appointments are made during school hours, there will be a request for evidence to support the child's attendance. (Code M will be used)
- + Hospital/consultant appointments may be authorised if school is provided with relevant evidence. (Code M will be used)
- + Vomiting and diarrhoea – school follows NHS advice around infection control and suggests that parents keep their child off school for 48hrs until the symptoms have stopped.

## Fixed Penalty Notice Fines

Penalty Notice Fines may be issued by the Education Welfare Service to adults with Parental Responsibility when a child has been absent from school for 20 or more sessions in any 12 week period during the academic year.

The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Persistent lateness after the register has closed
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Excessive holidays in term time
- Excessive delayed return from extended holidays
- Persistent absenteeism

All Penalty Notice Fine referrals are checked by the Education Welfare Service to ensure that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct.

## FAST TRACK to Court

The school works closely with the Education Welfare Service and will seek advice in cases where a FAST TRACK referral may be more appropriate than a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine. The criteria for a FAST TRACK referral are the same as for a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine.

### 3. Unauthorised Leave (Term Time Holidays)

We recognise that pupil absence during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning. In line with DFE and Local Authority guidance, St Thomas More R.C. Primary School operates a 'zero- tolerance' policy with regards to Unauthorised Leave. **Parents are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time.**

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday.

Parents must notify the school in advance of taking a holiday using a 'Notification of Term Time Unauthorised Absence' form available from the office and on the website. In some circumstances, we understand that this may not be possible, however it is a parents responsibility to ensure that school are notified as soon as practically possible.

Parents are reminded that under the 2013 Education Regulations, Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless *\*exceptional circumstances\** exist.

Unauthorised Leave of 10 or more sessions (5 or more school days) will qualify for a Fixed Penalty Notice Fine for each adult with Parental Responsibility, regardless of whether they travelled with the child.

In addition to this measure, parents are notified that Unauthorised Leave in excess of 40 sessions (20 school days) will result in the loss of the child's school place. Each case for removing a child from roll is reviewed independently with the Education Welfare Service and the Children Missing Education Team.

*\*'Exceptional Circumstances' can be described as "rare, significant, unavoidable and short, and that the leave could not reasonably be scheduled at another time".*

**For further support or advice on school attendance, you can contact:**

Education Welfare Service  
Number One Riverside  
Smith Street  
Rochdale  
OL16 1XU

*Tel: 01706 925115*