

St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School



Policy document:	ATTENDANCE POLICY
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Article 28 Every child has the right to an education

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. The government expects:

- Schools and local authorities to:
- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons

Rationale

St Margaret Clitherow Roman Catholic Primary School is committed to support improved school attendance. School attendance is a priority for the council and our school. It is a vital part of school improvement and all aspects of school life can have a significant impact on pupils' attendance levels. Research has also identified a strong correlation between attendance and attainment. We want every young person to achieve their full potential - with your help we can!

Below are guidelines for the school on the issues relating to attendance. The information for these guidelines is taken from various sources, including the local authority's good practice guidelines, proven and effective policies from other schools, guidance from the DES, and existing good practice from our school.

Purposes

1. To have clear, relevant guidelines for keeping registers which are carefully and routinely carried out by staff.
2. To ensure that good attendance has a high priority with pupils, parents/carers and teachers.
3. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence and address patterns of absence.
4. To understand the action that can be taken by the Local Authority's Attendance Improvement Service to ensure good attendance.

Rights, responsibilities and roles

School

1. All relevant staff will understand and apply the school's registration process.
2. All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, either electronically or manually.

NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable as they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.

3. The school will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents/carers through a variety of media: the school's website, newsletters, and school prospectus and parents meetings.
4. All absenteeism and lateness will be recorded accurately and monitored.
5. All pupils' with attendance below 95% will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.
6. The school will have clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness, allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
7. The school will annually review its Attendance Policy and associated procedures in consultation with the Local Authorities Attendance Improvement Service.

Parent(s)/carer(s)

1. Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action.
2. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
3. Parents/carers are responsible for immediately informing the school at which their child is registered of the reason for any absence by phone call or in person on the first morning of any absence and thereafter. This should be done before 9.30am.

4. Parents/carers should not take their child on holiday in term time and are to be made aware of the potential consequences of a Penalty Notice being issued or subsequent prosecution of doing so without the school's prior written permission.

Authorised/Unauthorised absence

All absences must be explained by parents/carers. The Headteacher will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence.

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences *may be* as follows:

- Illness (1)
- Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement
- Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (2)

This list is not exhaustive.

(1) Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a child has been absent for 3 days or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below 96% and/or the child is regularly away from school due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. Medical evidence can be in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication or an appointment card showing name of child and date they visited.

If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, evidence should be provided so that the appropriate support can be provided.

(2) Unavoidable medical/dental appointments

All routine (non-emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a child need to have an appointment during school hours, such as in an emergency, hospital or CAMHS appointment, evidence of this will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school recording the absence as unauthorised.

(3) Covid 19

A small number of children may be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they:

- are self-isolating
- have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
- are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

If your child is unable to attend school or college for these reasons, St Margaret Clitherow will provide resources for remote education.

Holidays in term time/ Leave of absence

Legislation

From the 1st September 2013 amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006¹ came into force.

These amendments remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Requesting the absence

All requests for a child to be absent from School during term time must be made in writing at least a half term in advance of the proposed absence by completing the absence request form obtainable from Reception.

The Headteacher and a school governor will decide whether or not to authorise the absence, on a case by case basis, and will only do so where there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision.

If the absence is unauthorised and still taken, the school may request the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice to the parents/carers for the unauthorised absence.

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<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a00223868/regulations-amendments>

If no absence request is made

If a child is absent from School during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the School will write to the parents/carers to inform them that the absence has not been authorised and that a Penalty Notice may be issued.

If the parents/carers can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an **exceptional circumstance** and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the said absence, then a Penalty Notice will not be issued.

Please be aware:

In situations where a child accumulates 10 or more unauthorised absences (the equivalent of 5 school days) within any six-month period, parents/carers will make themselves liable to receiving a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, per child.

The Penalty Notice carries a penalty of £60 if paid in full within 21 days or £120 if paid in full after this time but within 28 days. We are unable to accept part or late payments and there is no legal right to appeal the Penalty Notice once it has been issued. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid, this is likely to result in Court proceedings being taken against you for an offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance contrary to section 444 Education Act 1996. If convicted, you may face a fine of up to £2500 and/or a maximum 3 months imprisonment.

Please note: only **one** Penalty Notice will be issued **in any two year period.** This means that if a Penalty Notice is paid, and the child accumulates a further 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (5 school days), this will result in the parent/carer receiving a summons to Court for an offence contrary to s444 Education Act. The matter cannot be dealt with by way of a further Penalty Notice being issued.

Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per child. A 'parent' can be any person, whether a natural parent or not, who has care of the child or young person.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

First day reporting

- On the first day of any absence the parent/carer should ring school before 09:30am to inform the school that their child will be absent from school

and give a reason for that absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is to be requested.

- Staff will remind parent(s)/carer(s) to contact the school each day unless there is a definitive timescale of absence. For example there needs to be 48 hours clear from last bout of sickness and/or diarrhoea.
- Admin staff must keep a log of absence calls and reasons received each day.
- Registration marks must be made available immediately after registration in order that where necessary; any absenteeism can be followed up by admin staff. At St Margaret Clitherow this is recorded on SIMS, however if this is unavailable a paper copy is sent to the office.
- A protocol is in place to ensure any unexplained absence is followed up – see appendix 1.
- If any member of staff is concerned about an absence, the concerns will be raised with attendance/administrative staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge of the absence. If there are still concerns they should be passed to the Head teacher or Assistant Head teacher.
- Between 09:30am – 10:30am attendance/administrative staff will phone the parents/carers of any pupil whose absence is unexplained.
- If the school are unable to contact the first point of call the school will call any other contacts that have been provided, including grandparents and work.
- At St Margaret Clitherow if the absence still cannot be explained an attendance officer will be asked to call at the home.
- If a child remains absent for three days without any notification, a member of staff will visit the home address.
- If, after three days, the school has concerns about the child's whereabouts and wellbeing, the school will contact the Torbay Education Safeguarding Service (TESS) for advice.
- It remains the schools responsibility to try to contact the parent and visit the home if necessary.
- If after 10 days, the child has continued unauthorised absence, a Child Missing Education (CME) referral will be made to the Attendance Improvement Service.

If the child is subject to a child protection plan or if the school has particular safeguarding concerns and feel the child is at risk of immediate harm, the school will immediately notify the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) without waiting for 10 schools days.

A child may be referred to the MASH if it is considered that they have totally disengaged from learning and/or the parent is subject to statutory intervention.

Lateness

There are two negative results caused by children who constantly arrive late. These are:

- The loss of education suffered by the child which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

- School gates will be locked promptly 5 minutes before School day is due to start. Pupils who arrive after 8:55am are considered 'Late' (L) and will be required to enter the school via reception to sign in and record the reason for their late arrival.
- Children who arrive after 09:10am should be considered as 'Late (after registers close)' (U).
- Registration staff will record the appropriate late mark in the registers and these will be entered into SIMS our computerised attendance programme.
- Late gates will be implemented on a regular basis.
- All pupils' attendance records will be checked every half term for lates before registers close (L) and lates after registers close (U). Letters will be sent to ensure parents are aware of
- Where either/or these late arrivals cumulate to 5 or more in a half term the school will write to parents/carers of the pupil in question to discuss any support needs and ways of accessing support.

Attendance letters

Where a child's attendance falls below 96%, the following actions will be taken:

Attendance letter 1 will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 96%.

Attendance letter 2 will be sent 2 weeks after letter 1 or later in the same academic year if attendance has not improved, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with our attendance office Rachel Ripley.

Attendance letter 3/Medical evidence letter will be sent if parents/carers do not attend the meeting and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with Miss Lowry and Rachel Ripley.

If, at any time, a child has 10 or more unauthorised absences equating to 10% within a 6 months period, the school should attend a legal consultation with the Local Authority to consider legal options available. Legal options include: Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and Prosecution. Please see the Local Authority website for further details.

Strategies for promoting attendance

St Margaret Clitherow RC Primary School, have a number of strategies to celebrate good school attendance.

These include:

- Weekly class winners for highest % attendance given out in weekly Celebrations Assembly
- 100% attendance certificates give out termly.
- Classes with 100% celebrated on Twitter
- 2 marbles in the class jar for 100% class attendance
- 20 minutes extra play if whole class in for a full week)

Whole school level

- All staff are clear about their role in promoting attendance and feel confident in this role
- Parents/carers are encouraged to understand the importance of attendance and punctuality for successful learning, and this issue is regularly addressed through newsletters, parents' evenings, assemblies and work in class.
- A range of strategies are used to promote good attendance, at the individual, class and whole school level. These strategies will include, for example, phone calls made to home on the first day of any unexplained

- absence and incentive schemes for attendance. They might also include breakfast and after school club, parenting groups and small group work with children.
- System in place to ensure that attendance data is accurate and regularly analysed
 - The school regularly and consistently challenges reasons for no attendance and where appropriate does not authorise the absence

Individual child level

- Systems are in place for noticing and celebrating good or improved attendance
- Systems are in place for identifying individuals with poor or unusual attendance patterns
- All children with poor or unexpected attendance patterns are offered an opportunity to discuss any difficulties that they may be having in or out of school
- Children are aware of what they miss when they are absent from school and are encouraged to catch up with their work
- Parents/carers are routinely contacted in cases of poor attendance or lateness and steps are taken to build positive relationships with, and to support, particularly hard-to-reach families
- Class teachers will liaise directly with parents if attendance is a concern and consider how improvements may be achieved.
- A system is in place to ensure children who have been absent for an extended period are reintegrated carefully back in to school
- Effective links with a number of agencies ensure that a joined-up approach is used to plan and implement appropriate intervention with individuals or groups experiencing attendance difficulties.
- Use of a Family Support Worker to discuss individual supports needs and ways of accessing that support
- Use of an attendance officer to analyse data and ensure processes are being implemented.
- Use of a first day door knocking service when reason for an absence has not been given.

Appendix 1

Promoting pupil attendance and recording absence is important because attendance at school is known to be a key protective factor in safeguarding children and young people.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

First day reporting

- Parent(s)/carer(s) are reminded of the first day contact procedure at the beginning of each term, via the school newsletter.
- Parent(s)/carer(s) to ring before 09:30 to inform that their child will be absent from school and give the reason for that absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is to be requested. Staff must remind parent(s)/carer(s) to contact the school each day unless there is a definitive timescale of absence. For example, there needs to be 48 hours clear from last bout of sickness and/or diarrhoea.
- After registration a designated adult will check registers for absences. If no call is made by parent(s)/carer(s) by 09:30, the designated staff member will liaise with admin staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge for the absence.
- Between 09:30 and 10:30 admin staff will phone the parent(s)/carer(s) of any pupil whose attendance is unexplained and on each consecutive day that the absence remains unexplained.
- If there is still no contact or explanation of child's absence: Firstly, the school will work through the list of named contacts on the address card. If still no reason/response given then, secondly, if they have a sibling at another school. The other school will be contacted to try and find a reason or ascertain whether there are shared concerns.
- If those two steps have not been successful, the school will contact the attendance worker or family support worker to visit the family home (Rachel Ripley– if absent South West Family Values)
- Finally, if no contact of any sort has been made by the end of the school day the information will be logged with social services. (Cathy Lowry – if absent Hannah Maskell)
- If there is 10 days of a child's continued absence, then the information will be passed on to the LEA Attendance Improvement Service with a Child Missing from Education (CME) referral.

A reason for absence is always required verbally by phone, or by e mail. The school may then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence. If no reason is provided within one week of return the school will mark the absences as unauthorised.