

St Matthew's CE (Aided) Primary School and Nursery Centre

Attendance Policy



2014

Introduction

- At St Matthew's Primary School we expect children to attend school every day, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.
- Excellent attendance and punctuality is important if children are to benefit from everything school has to offer. St Matthew's believes that regular attendance at school is vital for children to be successful.
- School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life and research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance, punctuality and educational progress and attainment.
- Parents/carers and the school staff are partners in making this a success and this partnership is very important to the school. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that your child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.
- As parents/carers, it is your responsibility to ensure your child/children arrive at school and return home safely.

Aims

Our attendance policy aims to :

- Support children and their parents/carers in the establishment of the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Ensure that all children have full and equal access to the best education that we can offer in order to increase learning;
- Enable children to progress smoothly, confidently and with continuity through the school;
- Make parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets

Expectations

We expect that all children will :

- Attend school every day as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so
- Attend school punctually
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher or school office any problems that may affect their school attendance

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day

- Ensure that they contact the school **daily** of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
- Notify school immediately of any changes to contact details

We expect that the school will :

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Provide a sympathetic response to any child's or parent's/carer's concerns
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality, monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents on the first day of absence when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers. Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the Headteacher can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested.
- Regularly inform parents/carers of the % attendance of all children
- Make initial enquiries regarding children who are not attending regularly
- The Nominated Attendance Person in school will monitor and support school attendance and punctuality
- The Nominated Attendance Person in school will refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Telford and Wrekin Attendance Support Team
- Will notify the Local Authority after 15 days sickness
- Will notify the Attendance Support Team after 10 days unexplained absence

Definitions

- Every day counts as two sessions
- Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone.
- Regular attendance means that your child must attend school every day, unless there are justified reasons, and arrive at school on time.

Authorised Absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. The Headteacher authorises the absence.

Unauthorised Absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher
- Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which an "authorisation" has been given

Examples	Authorised absences	Unauthorised absences
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genuine illness of the pupil; • Hospital/dental/doctors appointment for the pupil; • Major religious observances; • Visits to prospective new schools; • External exams or educational assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shopping/day trip/visit to a theme park; • a birthday treat; • oversleeping due to a late night; • looking after other children/other family member; • appointments for other family members; • holidays which have not been agreed

Each child's attendance can be summarised as :

Grading	Attendance %	Rating	Action
A	95 – 100%	Good – Well done	This will help all aspects of your child's progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic. Your child's attendance is at, or above, the school target.
B	90 – 95%	Below expected	Strive to build on this. Your child's attendance is below expected and will be monitored. A letter may be sent to you to inform you of your child's attendance.
C	85 – 90%	Poor	Absence is now significantly affecting your child's attainment and progress. This is a cause for concern and will be closely monitored. You will receive a letter from the Nominated Attendance Person in School and intervention will be commenced.
D	80 – 85%	Unacceptable	Absence is seriously affecting attainment and progress and disrupting your child's development. Your child's attendance is not a major concern. It is probable that legal intervention will have already commenced.
E	< 80% attendance	Grave concern	Legal proceedings will by now have progressed rapidly.

The school and the Telford and Wrekin Attendance Support Team work closely together and regularly monitor both attendance and punctuality. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

When to Report Absence to the School

All absences must be reported on a daily basis. In all cases of absence the parents/carers should:

- only keep your child away from school if really necessary. The school will always call and send home an unwell child;
- telephone the school on 01952 386260 at the earliest opportunity to let them know why your child is going to be absent. Please try and phone by 9.10am at the very latest.
- Please call daily and keep the school informed if more than one day's absence is necessary;
- Send a note to school explaining the reason for absence;
- If medical appointments are absolutely necessary, please bring your child to school for the rest of the school day.

St Matthew's uses a "1st day calling" system. If your child fails to register or is absent and we have not received notification by 9.10am a call or text will be made to you. This only applies on the first day of absence. It is the parent's/carer's responsibility to call the school each day their child is off school and explain the reason why.

If a child is absent from school with no explanation offered by the parents/carers within two weeks, it becomes an unauthorised absence.

Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other children in the class. It is paramount therefore that all children arrive at school on time. For school children the gates and doors open at 8.40am. Registration closes promptly at 9.00am. If your child arrives after this time they must enter via the school office where they will be signed in. Your child will receive a late mark on the register.

- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.
- Registration takes place at 9.00am and pupils who arrive after this time will be recorded as late to school.
- Registers close at 9.30am and after this lateness may be recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the Local Authority.
- Afternoon registration is taken at 1.30pm.
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will be dealt with by meetings with parents/carers.
- Children's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

Pupils Leaving During the School Day

During school hours, the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day.

- Children are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.

- Whenever possible, parents/carers should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time.
- Parents/carers are requested to **confirm in writing**, by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, and the expected return time.
- Children must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return.
- Where a child is being collected from the school, parents/carers are to report to the school office before the child is allowed to leave the site.
- If a child leaves the school site without permission, their parents/carers will be contacted. *Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the child as a missing person.*

The Law

By law, parents and carers must ensure that all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) receive a suitable, full-time education (Education Act 1996). Telford and Wrekin Council Attendance Support Team support both schools and parents/carers to ensure that every child attends school regularly. As a parent/carer you may be committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly. This may lead to the issuing of a penalty notice, prosecution or application for an Education Supervision Order.

Leave of Absence

- Please be aware that The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into effect on 1st September 2013, states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Any absence must be requested as far in advance as possible, and no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date. A form (Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time) will need to be collected from the office and completed.
- The guidance from Telford and Wrekin Council states that if a parent/carer takes their child out of school, eg on holiday or other unauthorised leave of absence, for 5 days (10 sessions) or more, without the authority of the Headteacher, each parent/carer may be liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who is absent.
- If leave is taken without authorisation by the school, it may be recorded as an unauthorised absence and Telford and Wrekin Attendance Support Team will be notified. A Penalty Notice will probably be issued.

Penalty Notices

Under existing legislation, each parent/carer commits an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as “unauthorised” (those absences for which the Headteacher has not given permission). Depending on circumstances, such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Telford and Wrekin Council considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in the following circumstances where unauthorised absence occurs :

- Children identified by police or Education Welfare Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- Unauthorised leave of absence during term time (5 days or 10 sessions or more).
- Where it is judged that a parent/carer is failing to ensure their child's regular and punctual attendance at school and is failing to engage with any supportive measures proposed by the school. This may be considered if a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during the previous 6 school weeks. Unauthorised absence may include a child arriving late after close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised "leave of absence" taken in term time, parents/carers will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 (issued to each parent/carer, for each child) if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices will increase to £120 after 21 days but within 28 days. After 28 days, the LA may prosecute under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Behaviour and Penalty Notices relating to Exclusions

- Section 103 of the Education and Inspectors Act 2006 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. Failure to do so will render the parent/carer liable to a Penalty Notice.
- The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient may be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103.
- Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Compiled by Jayne Overall

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