

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

## Attendance Policy



2021 - 2022

## **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.

### **1. Aims**

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by :

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- 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;
- We will support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.
- Ensure attendance meets Government and Local Authority targets
- Act early to address patterns of absence

### **2. Legislation and guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance 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 :

- The Education Act 1996

- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

### **3. School Procedures**

#### **3.1 Attendance Register**

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will make 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

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm.

#### **3.2 Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6)

Parents can notify the school by either telephone, in person, by letter, email or through the school app (MySchoolApp).

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide 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 will be notified of this in advance.

### **3.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents 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.

Parents can notify the school by either telephone, in person, by letter, email or through the school app (MySchoolApp)

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Persistence lateness will be discussed with parents and strategies discussed as to how to improve the situation.

### **3.5 Following up absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

### **3.6 Reporting to parents**

The school will provide parents with an attendance certificate towards the end of the summer term with their annual report.

## **4. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

### **4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence**

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be "exceptional circumstances"

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher’s discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include :

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’ 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 education provision.

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

## 4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

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

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority’s code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account :

- A 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 excluding 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 the parent or withdraw the notice.

## 5. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school will advise parents as soon as their child's attendance drops below 90%. If the attendance does not improve then more formal letters will be issued and if the attendance deteriorates further the school will involve the Attendance Support Team at the local authority.

Attendance is rewarded at the end of the school year in attendance assemblies where certificates are issued for those children with the highest attendance.

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.

## 6. Attendance monitoring

The Nominated Attendance Person monitors pupil absence on a fortnightly basis.

Parents are expected to contact the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2)

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving the Attendance Support Team at the local authority.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

### **7.1 The governing body**

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **7.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **7.3 The Nominated Attendance Person**

The Nominated Attendance Person :

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with the local authority's Attendance Support Team to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

### **7.4 Class Teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

### **7.5 Office Staff**

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

#### **8. Monitoring Arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the School Business Manager. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

#### **9. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy.

## 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
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
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

<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	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)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

**Compiled by Jayne Overal**

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