

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



Attendance Policy 2025-2026

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This policy aligns with the requirements in statutory guidance KCSIE 2025, Dfe Attendance Guidance and Working together to improve school attendance Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities *August 2024*

Senior Attendance Champion: Rebecca Wilson, Acting Headteacher

Governor Attendance Champion: Mark Austin

This policy applies to all pupils at St Matthew's CE (Aided) Primary School and Nursery Centre including non-compulsory pupils (where appropriate). This policy can be found on our website and paper copies are also available from the school office. Our attendance as a whole school September 2024 to July 2025 was 94.64% (excluding nursery). This compares with national figures which stands at 93.1% (2024-2025), *Dfe Pupil Attendance in Schools Sept 1st 2025*.

1. Introduction

St Matthew's CE (Aided) Primary School and Nursery Centre are committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all our pupils. We recognise the importance of regular attendance in maximising the benefit of any educational opportunity, and the school recognises that irregular or non-attendance is a safeguarding concern, missing education places a child at risk of harm. We expect children to attend school every day, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. Encouraging and supporting excellent attendance is a crucial part of supporting our pupils to learn effectively.

Improving attendance is everyone's business. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

Parents/carers, school staff and pupils are partners in ensuring good attendance and this partnership is very important. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevents 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.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance at school is vital for pupils to be successful and to achieve their full potential; it **MUST** be a high

priority for schools, governors, LAs, parents and the pupils themselves. By not attending school regularly, pupils decrease the value of the education provided for them; they may also damage the learning of others because fluctuations in the size of pupil groups may restrict the scope for effective teaching. Poor attendance can present a safeguarding concern to schools.

2. School Attendance Team



Mrs R. Wilson
Acting Headteacher



Mrs A. Cadman-Smith
Pastoral Manager



Miss J. O'Connell
Business Manager

As part of our school's Early Help offer, our school attendance team are here to help and support families to ensure good attendance. If you have any concerns or issues regarding your child's attendance, please make an appointment to come in and speak to us.

3. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Inform parents and carers of the school's daily attendance routines (*Section 6.6*)

4. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [Part 6 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- [Part 3 of the Education Act 2002](#)
- [Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

From the Safeguarding Child Protection Policy September 2025:

Absent from Education

We believe children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. Our response to persistently absent pupils and children absent from education will support identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child absent from education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community. *(Child Protection Policy – Paragraph 334)*

The recognised figure for severely absent is 50% or less and persistent absence is being less than 90%, although concerns may still be raised if above this. We will require the behaviour and attendance lead to refer to and use the established protocol document of notification to the Local Authority, filling out the appropriate paperwork, policies and procedures for identifying all pupils who are absent from education and policies and procedures for pupils on a modified timetable (available from Telford & Wrekin Council). We recognise that pupils who are not accessing full time education are at greater risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation than other children. We therefore aim to reduce the number of pupils accessing a modified timetable. We will ensure any pupils accessing a modified timetable are seen regularly by school/college staff to help to ensure their safety and welfare. It is our aim that pupil's access modified timetables for the limited periods of time and children who on a child protection, child in need plan and/or have an Education Health Care Plan are not placed on a modified timetable. We will regularly monitor and review the use of modified timetables. *(Child Protection Policy – Paragraph 322)*

In addition to the above and where reasonably possible we will endeavour to hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. This goes beyond the legal minimum and is good practice to give us additional options to make contact with a responsible adult when a child is absent from education and poses a potential welfare/safeguarding concern. Where a child is on a Child Protection Plan has been absent from school for two consecutive days, we will notify the child's allocated social worker. *(Child Protection Policy – Paragraph 323)*

Where children leave the classroom or leave our grounds without permission, this is covered within our behaviour management policy and is also set against the backdrop of the legal framework of the Children Act 1989 s3 (5); 'Anyone who has care of a child without parental responsibility may do what is "reasonable" in all the circumstances to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. It is likely to be "reasonable" to inform the police, or children's services

departments, and, if appropriate, their parents, of the child/young person's safety and whereabouts'. However, in principle, if a pupil runs out of class we will establish where he or she has gone. Staff will not run after them but will seek additional support. It is advisable to keep a watchful eye on any children who has taken themselves out of our building and possibly out of our grounds, unless this watchful eye provokes the child to run further. It is and will be a judgement call for staff to take what they feel is reasonable action in line with the advice above. If a child is no longer on the premises, we will contact parents in the first instance. If they are not contactable, we will inform the police that a pupil has left and is at risk. (*Child Protection Policy – Paragraph 324*)

Where children go missing, including leaving school/college without permission, we will follow the [West Mercia Pathway for Children who go Missing from Home, care or Education](#). We always deem it appropriate to report pupils who go missing from school to the Police and children's services where we or parents cannot locate the child quickly. (*Child Protection Policy – Paragraph 325*)

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 The Governing Body

The governing body is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority.
 - Making sure the school work effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues

- The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The link governor responsible for attendance is Mr M. Austin who can be contacted via the school office 01952 386260 or via email on a3358@taw.org.uk.

5.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies issuing fixed penalty notices, where necessary, or authorising the school business manager to be able to do so. Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers.
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

5.3 The Designated Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Linking to safeguarding responsibilities as designated safeguarding lead
- Working closely with the Pastoral lead to establish effective systems for tackling absence
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed

The Designated Leader responsible for attendance is Mrs R. Wilson, who can be contacted via the school office 01952 386260 or via email on a3358@taw.org.uk.

5.4 The Attendance Officer/Pastoral Manager

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance
- Working with and external agencies to tackle persistent absence
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Working closely with the Designated Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance to establish effective systems for tackling absence
- Liaising with the school's pupils, parents/carers, the school's Business manager, and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Linking to safeguarding responsibilities as deputy designated safeguarding lead

The Attendance Officer/Pastoral Manager is Mrs A. Cadman-Smith who can be contacted via the school office 01952 386260 or via email on a3358@taw.org.uk.

5.5 Class Teachers

Class staff are responsible for:

- Recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using either / for present or N for absent, and submitting this information to the school office by **9:00am for morning registration** and **1:05pm for afternoon registration**
- Welcome all pupils by name and with a smile, developing positive relationships and providing a warm, safe learning environment for all pupils.
- Promote and praise good and improved attendance at all opportunities.
- Welcome pupils who have been absent with warmth – “it’s great to see you – we have missed you and I am really pleased you are better/back”.
- Be aware of absences of each child or patterns in absence in their group and make sure the child is supported in catching up missed work.
- Support individual pupils to achieve attendance targets through implemented tailored reward systems and interventions, liaising with the Attendance Officer/Pastoral Manager.
- Communicate with colleagues where necessary if there are any issues resulting from the absence that other staff should know (concern about work missed, response of other children, possible responses of colleagues) but also where there are possible safeguarding concerns reporting to the school’s DSLs.
- Staff raise any concerns regarding attendance during weekly staff meetings, if appropriate.

5.6 Office Staff (*J. O’Connell – Business Manager, J. Fenn – Office Administrator and P. Ellis – Administrative Assistant*)

Office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system using the correct codes (see Appendix 1)
- Recording and maintaining records on our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

- Transfer calls from parents to the pastoral lead to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Following up unexplained absences and alerting a member of the designated safeguarding team.
- Identifying and referring pupils to the Local Authority who are missing out on education.
- Liaising with the headteacher and governors (when required) regarding pupil absence who may reach the threshold for referral into the Local Authority for a penalty notice.

The attendance administrator is Miss J. O'Connell and can be contacted via the school office 01952 386260 or via email on a3358@taw.org.uk

5.7 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decide is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (ie lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call or email the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when their child is expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day. Where not possible, inform the school of the child's absence in advance by emailing or phoning the school office.
- If their child's absence rates are increasing and are causing concern, an attendance contract may be used to support parents to make improvements.
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting **Mrs A. Cadman-Smith** via the school office **01952 386260** or via email on a3358@taw.org.uk

5.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time by 8:50am.

6. Recording Attendance

6.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and

absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, 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 code.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8:50am and ends at 3:20pm for KS1 and 3:25pm for KS2

Pupils must arrive in school between 8:40am and 8:50am on each school day

The school gates will be closed at 8:50am

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am

The register for the second session will be taken at 1:00pm

6.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office staff. Unless otherwise agreed, we cannot accept absence reporting from anyone other than the pupil's parent.

Please inform the office staff of the reason for absence; 'ill/unwell' is not sufficient. This is to ensure our registration coding is accurate. We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If no contact is made by the parents a member of the office staff will telephone the parent/carer by 9:30am. If no contact is made by the parent a home visit may be made, if safeguarding concerns are present.

Where the absence is longer than **2 days**, or if there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, or if we have concerns about a pupil's attendance and have issued a SAL2 notice the

school may ask for 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 a pupil is absent from school due to illness for an extended period (5 days or more) will make a home visit to comply with our safeguarding responsibilities and to offer reassurance to the pupil and the family that we are "keeping the pupil in mind" and can make provisions at school for their return when they are well enough.

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.

6.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Details of the appointment must be given to the school office in person, via telephone or via email a3358@taw.org.uk at least 5 days in advance or as soon as possible.

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.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. (*Section 8*)

6.4 Lateness and Punctuality

Where a pupil arrives late:

- Pupils arriving after 8:50am will be marked as late (L code) with the minutes of lateness recorded.
- Pupils arriving after 9:20am will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U code). Sessions recorded as a U code count towards the threshold of ten sessions in ten weeks required for the issue of a penalty notice.

Pupils who arrive once the gates are closed at 8:50am will need to report to the main school reception and complete a form with a reason for lateness.

Once a child is late 5 times in a half-term the Pastoral Manager or Headteacher will contact the parents/carers to discuss any issues the family may have with arriving at school on time. Actions may be put into place following this.

Patterns of lateness are tracked weekly and reported to the governing body termly.

Punctuality will be tracked by the Attendance Officer and Attendance Team and the school will advise parents/carers if their child's punctuality falls **below 93%**. If the punctuality does not improve then more formal letters will be issued, and support meeting will be offered if the attendance deteriorates further the school will involve the Attendance Support Team at the local authority

6.5 Following up Unexplained Absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Contact the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may complete a home visit, contact Children's Services or the police.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving additional agencies
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance and identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (*Section 9*) as appropriate
- If no contact has been made with the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence, we will follow '**Day One**' procedures.

6.6 Absence Management Procedures

Day One

1. A member of the office staff will telephone. A voicemail message will be left if no answer is received asking the parent/carer to contact school. (*These calls to be completed by 10am*).
2. At 11:30am, if we still have had no contact from parents/carers the office will call priority number 1 and priority number 2 numbers, if there is still no contact the office will inform designated safeguarding lead or a member of senior leadership team and a decision will be made whether to do a safe and well check at the child's home. Two members of staff **may** complete the safe and well check. (*on Day 1 and Day 2 this will be dependent on what stage of attendance monitoring the family are at and whether there are any safeguarding concerns*).
3. Staff must not enter the home and will ask to see the child/ren. Staff who are doing the safe and well to inform a point of contact at school which family they are visiting. If there is nobody home, staff will leave a safe and well letter.

If there is nobody home, staff will leave a safe and well letter.

Day Two

If no contact again from parents, repeat the process followed on Day 1.

Day Three

If there is no contact again from parents/carers, repeat the process and then:

1. Two members of staff will complete a safe and well check in person at the child's home. Staff must not enter the home and will ask to see the child/ren. Staff who are doing the safe and well to inform a point of contact at school which family they are visiting. Safe and well checks may also be completed by other agencies eg. Strengthening Families, Social Services, Police
2. If there is nobody home staff will leave a safe and well letter and may follow one or more of the below processes:
 - Consider sending a School Attendance Letter (SAL), if an explanation has still not been received after three days of unexplained absence
 - Consider if there is evidence of a term time holiday taken without notification to the school
 - Refer to the school's 'Nominated Attendance Person' (NAP) or Attendance Support Team (ASTO at the Local Authority, to follow up absence if no response is received after 5 days of absence and refer to the family social worker or to 'Family Connect' if there are additional concerns regarding the family and no contact can be made with the parent
3. Where there are safeguarding or similar concerns regarding the pupil/family additional agencies will be contacted immediately if the school is unable to make contact with the family. (e.g Social Care, Family Hub, Family Connect, Police)
4. Invite the parents into school for an 'Attendance Concern Meeting' (ACM) after a maximum of 10 days absence unless other action is planned. This meeting should include a senior member of staff, Pastoral Manager, parent, pupil and the NAP. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance.
5. Pastoral lead will support the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks. In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence then a 'Reintegration Plan' can be implemented. The plan should include all members of the school staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupils needs as possible
6. Provide Early Help advice and support to the family, undertaking an Early Help Assessment if appropriate and make a referral to Family Hub if it is felt the family would benefit from additional support. In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of the school staff will make attendance a priority and convey to the pupils the importance of their education

6.7 Identifying Pupils who are Absent from Education and Missing Education.

St Matthew's Primary School and the Local Authority recognises that whilst some children are out of school for a few days, others can be persistently absent, go missing with their families and there are some that do not have educational provision in place at all. All of these are forms of children who are absent from education.

At St Matthew's we regard any child who meets the threshold of being absent from education, for more than 10 days (*or less if deemed necessary*) as a safeguarding concern as being absent

from or missing education can increase the risk of a child experiencing harm. Following our child protection policy, we may consult with the local authority children's services when school absence indicates safeguarding concerns.

The Education Act 1996 states that all children, regardless of their circumstances are entitled to an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special needs they may have. We use the following classifications locally to aid monitoring and tracking:

1. Children Missing Education (CME) this is a national definition and covers children who are of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving education.
2. Children Who Are Absent from Education (CWAFE). This is referenced in Keeping Children Safe in Education and includes all pupils who are on a school roll, but who are missing education for a number of reasons, including but not limited to, persistent absence or severe absence, children who receive a modified timetable and children who have not attended school for a period of time.

In circumstances where a child meets the threshold for being absent from education or missing in education we will refer to:

Telford & Wrekin Policy & Procedure for: Children Who are Absent From Education

This guidance encompasses:

- Children Missing Education (CME)
- Children out of School (COOS)
- Children Not Receiving Education (CNRE)

Children may be missing education for a number of reasons which may include.

- Being absent from school for 10 or more school days consecutively.
- Not having a school place yet allocated to them
- School refusal/avoidance
- Being Electively Home Educated (EHE) but not receiving a suitable education at home.
- Having disappeared from education and their whereabouts are unknown.

6.8 Electively Home Educated (EHE)

Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove a child from school with a view to educating at home we will provide information to the local authority and encourage parent/carers to attend an Elective Home Education Multi Agency Meeting (MAM) information sharing meeting. Where a child has an Education, Health and Care plan local authorities will need to review the plan, working closely with parents and carers to ensure EHE can be provided with the emphasis on ensuring the best interests of the child.

We will follow the Telford & Wrekin Council, [EHE pathway](#).

7. Reporting to Parents

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via termly parents evening or reports. Parents also have access to their child's live attendance through the school's data reporting system Arbour

Additionally, the school will celebrate attendance through our weekly celebration assembly and Friday Feature. Improved attendance or concerning attendance for individual pupils through letters to parents/carers.

8. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

8.1 Approval for Term-time Absence

1. Parents wishing the school to consider granting leave in term time should read these notes carefully and then complete and send the request form found on our website Request for leave. **Where is this found?** This form should be sent to the school in time for the request to be considered before the desired period of absence. *(Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any planned absence before receiving the school's decision regarding their request).* In any event the request form must be received by the school at least **four weeks** before the leave in term time requested dates to allow sufficient time for appropriate consideration.
2. The granting of leave of absence in term time is, by law, a matter for consideration and decision by the Headteacher. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time. The Department for Education (DfE) Guidance [‘Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(Feb 2024\)’](#) states that: Generally, the DfE does not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Telford & Wrekin Local Authority (LA) policy supports that view. Where such requests are made, the Headteacher should decide if there are exceptional circumstances before the leave is granted, if the leave is granted the Headteacher has the discretion to agree the duration of that leave.
3. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents, therefore, need to consider very carefully before making any request for leave in term time, the demands of the National and wider School Curriculum especially at the Key Stage Assessment Stage. In considering a request, the school may also take account of:
 - The exceptional circumstances stated that have given rise to the request; • whether the child is compulsory school age
 - The stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements
 - Whether the same trip could be taken during the 13 weeks school is closed to pupils?
 - Pupils on examination courses or due to take SATS will not normally be granted leave of absence.
4. Where parents have children in more than one school, a separate request must be made to each school. The Headteacher of each school will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their school. However, there is an expectation that all schools involved will communicate and all agree a decision whether to authorise or not. It is hoped that if this situation arises parents will be persuaded to accept the reasons for refusal given and, thereby, withdraw any leave requests.
5. Where requests for a grant of leave in term time are received from only one parent the response letter – agreeing or refusing – will be either addressed to both/all parents

where they live at the same address or to each where they do not. This is to ensure, particularly in the case of a refusal, that both or all parents are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring a refusal as the refusal letter clearly states that each parent may receive a penalty notice.

6. Should the school decide to grant the leave but the child does not return to school at the time s/he was expected to (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave in term time period) and, no information is available to the school to explain/justify the continuing absence or, make known the whereabouts of the child, his/her place at the school could be lost.
7. Should the School decide not to grant the leave and parents still take their child out of school the absence will be recorded as unauthorised which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £160 per parent per child. This Penalty Notice fine will be reduced to £80 if paid within the first 21 days. Failure to pay the £160 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings, which could ultimately result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or imprisonment of up to three months.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (*Section 6.3*)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents’/carers’ religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. We set our dates in accordance with guidance from Telford & Wrekin Council.
- 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 educational provision.
- Unavoidable family circumstances for which time off is agreed by school ie bereavement, funerals, family crisis and other unforeseen situations as deemed appropriate in discussions between families and school staff.

9. Legal Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis. Legal sanctions can be applied to all parents/carers and step-parents.

From August 19th 2024 the Government have introduced a new ‘national framework for Penalty Notices’. (in Telford & Wrekin the changes apply from 1st September 2024).

There are significant changes that parents need to be aware of:

- If your child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 school week rolling period, you may be issued with a Penalty Notice. These 10 sessions may include any unauthorised absence, including leave in term time and do not have to be consecutive.

- Penalty Notices are increasing to £160 from September 2024. This can be reduced to £80 but only for the first Penalty Notice issued, if paid within 21 days – this reduction does not apply to any subsequent Penalty Notice.
- Any 2nd Penalty Notice, to the same parent for the same child, issued within three years of the date of the first Penalty Notice will be charged at a flat rate of £160
- A third Penalty Notice will not be issued within a three-year rolling period, to the same parent for the unauthorised absence of the same child, - alternative action or legal measures will be utilised for subsequent offences
- If in an individual case the local authority believes a Penalty Notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. For example, when a parent purposefully tries to avoid a Penalty Notice by taking their child out of school when there is only four pupil days in school and the fifth day is for example a PD day or bank holiday attached to that week. If in an individual case the local authority believes a Penalty Notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, when parent(s) are deliberately or purposefully avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for events such as birthdays and taking their child out of school, or when there are only four pupil days in school and the fifth day is for example a PD day or bank holiday.
- In some circumstances a ‘Notice to Improve’ may be issued – However, a Notice to Improve will only be used in cases where support is appropriate. They will not be issued in cases of unauthorised leave in term time for holidays, where information for parents is included on schools website or a simple warning by the school that a Penalty Notice could be issued if unauthorised leave in term time is taken will suffice.

‘Parents should always apply to the Headteacher for any request for leave in term time by completing a request form available from school. (DfE guidance states schools should not authorise leave retrospectively so any leave in term time taken without a request being submitted will be unauthorised absence)’.

In developing and publishing the new national framework, the Government has renewed appeals to parents not to take their children out of school during term time. The Governors and Headteacher of this school support this and students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances. The DfE Guidance [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(Feb 2024\)](#) states that: Generally, the DfE does not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. (Paragraph 38.)

Each application for leave in term time will be considered and if it is agreed and authorised the Headteacher will determine the duration of any leave. However, if the application is not agreed and the absence occurs the dates will be unauthorised. Parents will be notified of any decision in writing. This notification may be hand delivered directly to the parent or posted to the parents’ home address.

As a school we are asked to inform you that in line with Telford and Wrekin Council Policy, if your child is absent for 10 school sessions within a 10-week rolling period and that absence is unauthorised, you may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine, criteria is as detailed above.

In addition to penalty notices we will also consider referring a pupil with poor attendance to the Attendance Support Team (AST) in the Local Authority prosecutions under section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996. This may lead to an interview under caution (IUC) and Legal intervention. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

10. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

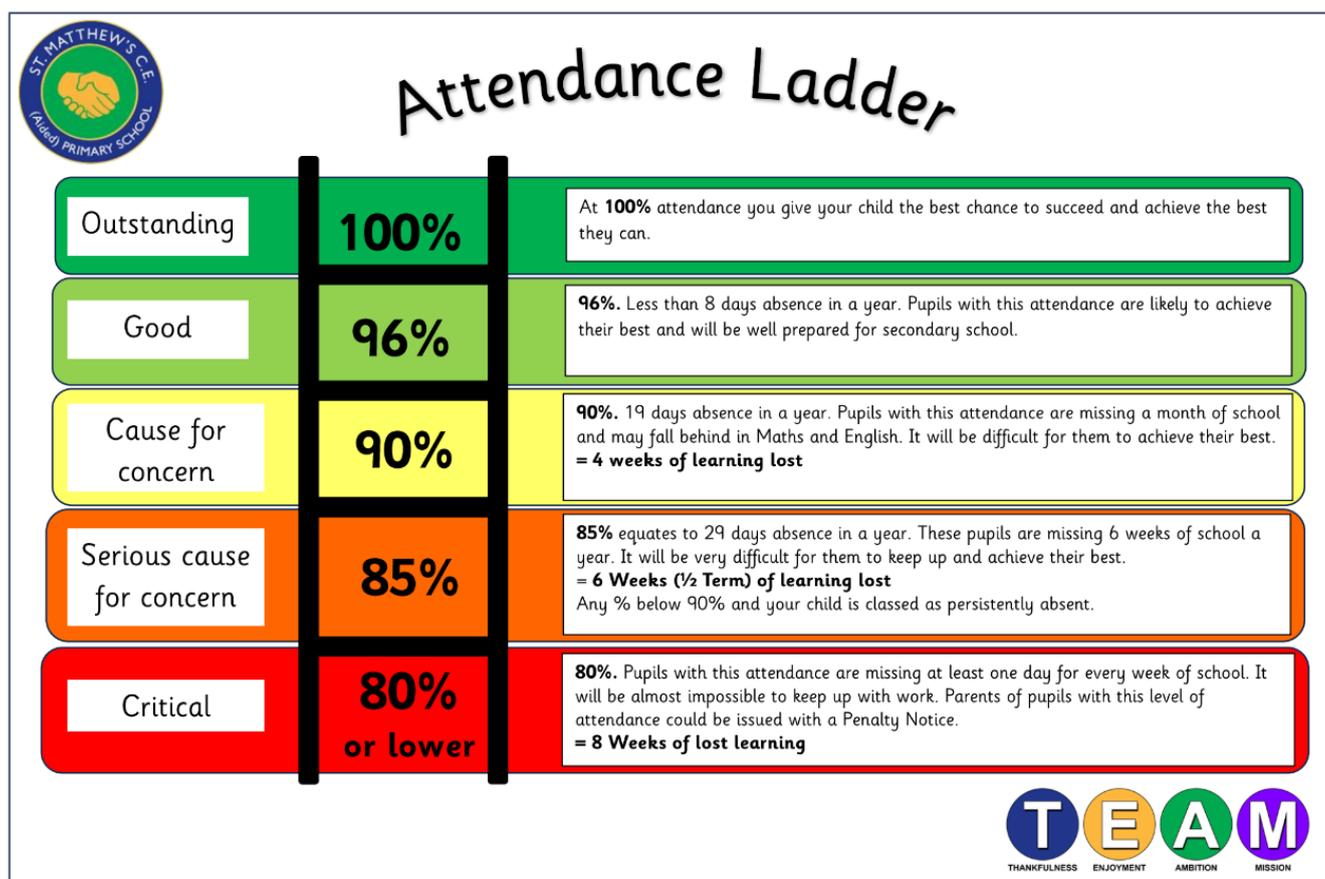
The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

To help us all to focus on this we:

- Hold a weekly assembly celebrating good attendance for individual classes
- Have an attendance board in the hall displaying each classes weekly attendance
- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular newsletter and on our website
- Report to you how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment
- Run events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school
- Have a weekly reward sticker for the class with the best attendance that week – publicised in the Friday Feature.

The school will advise parents/carers as soon as their child's attendance drops below **90%**. See *Appendix 3: Attendance Flowchart*. If the attendance does not improve then more formal letters will be issued, a support package and action plan will be put in place and if the attendance deteriorates further the school will involve the Attendance Support Team at the local authority.

Each child's attendance can be summarised using the Attendance Ladder below:



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.

11. Supporting Pupils who are Absent or Returning to School

At St Matthew's we recognise that supporting pupils returning to school after a prolonged period of absence will need an individual tailored approach where school works together with the family and external agencies (if appropriate) to meet individual needs.

11.1 Pupils Absent due to Complex Barriers to Attendance

Where a pupil is absent due to complex barriers to attendance we may:

- Meet with the pupil and a family member before they start back to discuss their concerns and agree a plan for their first day/week back. This can help alleviate anxiety.
- Arrange peer support and inform teachers of any special requirements.
- Provide school-based interventions may be offered: Cool Kids, breakfast club, reward charts, Early Help offer, including referrals to external agencies for support, calm down areas, alternative entrances and pastoral manager support.
- Request support from external agencies. This may include referrals to Early Help/Family Hub Services.

- Inform all staff of any barriers to attendance that is appropriate to be shared.
- Provide Pastoral Monitoring – the pastoral manager will support the child through the day with academic and social interactions.
- Have a specific point of contact for parents and pupils.
- Consider the use of a modified timetable.

11.2 Pupils Absent due to Mental or Physical Ill Health or SEND

Where a pupil is absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND we may:

- Meet with the pupil and a family member before they start back to discuss their concerns and agree a plan for their first day/week back.
- Use the meeting to update or complete an Individual Healthcare Plan.
- Where a pupil has an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.
- Request support from medical or hospital school staff. Where possible liaise with the school nurse to ensure all relevant medical information is updated.
- Inform staff who need to know of the effects of the medical condition on the student, and who should be contacted if the student falls ill while at school or on a school outing.
- Arrange peer support and inform teachers of any special requirements.
- Request support from external agencies.
- Inform all staff of any barriers to attendance that is appropriate to be shared.
- School-based interventions may be offered: Cool Kids, breakfast club, reward charts, Early Help offer, including referrals to external agencies for support, calm down areas, alternative entrances and pastoral manager support.
- Pastoral Monitoring – the pastoral manager will support the child through the day with academic and social interactions.

Where a pupil has an education health and care plan (EHCP) and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

11.3 Pupils Returning to School After a Lengthy or Unavoidable Period of Absence

Where a pupil is returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, we, as soon as parents have informed the school of the expected date of return:

- Meet with the pupil and a family member before they start back to discuss their concerns and agree a plan for their first day/week back.
- Arrange peer support and inform teachers of any special requirements.
- Soft start: parents/child will be given the option to arrive through the school office, where the child will be welcomed by an adult known to them.
- Discuss a plan for pre teaching/catching up.
- Have a specific point of contact for parents and pupils.
- Pastoral Monitoring – the pastoral manager will support the child through the day with academic and social interactions.

12. Attendance Monitoring

The school admin/office and the attendance officer/pastoral lead monitors pupil absence daily, weekly and creates alerts for pupils who are monitored for safeguarding or attendance purposes.

Parents are expected to contact the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (*Sections 6.3 and 11.2*)

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider creating an attendance action plan and 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.

The severely absence threshold is 50%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 50%, the pupil will be classified as a severely 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.

12.1 Monitoring Attendance

- The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.
- Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Pupil-level absence data will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

Data will be 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.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement and share this with the governing body.

12.2 Analysing Attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance
- Identify pupils or groups of pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence.
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full-year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

12.3 Using Data to Improve Attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis.
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (*see section 12.4 below*)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing body and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.

12.4 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see above section: sanctions)
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them

13. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Claire Ashley. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

14. Links with Other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Present Codes	
/\	present during registration
B	educated off site and taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed
P	Sporting activity with prior agreement from school
V	educational visit or trip
W	work experience
Absent Codes	
Authorised Absences	
C	exceptional circumstances
C1	in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	absent due to part-time timetable
D	dual registered
E	suspended or permanently excluded
I	illness (not medical or dental appointments)
J1	job/school/college interview
M	medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as C if agreed)
S	study leave
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	unable to attend due to whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
Unauthorised Absence	
G	holiday (not agreed)
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	late after register has closed

Non- Statistical codes	
Z	pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (eg holidays, insets and polling station days)

Request for Leave during Term Time

Date.....

To: The Headteacher of:.....(School)

I request permission for leave in term time from school for my child:

(full name)

from (date) to (date) for school days.

My child will be accompanied during the leave by:

Re

(parent/carer) and (parent/carer).....

The **exceptional circumstances** and reason for this request are: -

(If necessary, please continue on a separate sheet and attach it to this form)

I have (an)other child(ren) in (an)other school(s) as follows

Child(ren) (full name(s) School(s)

.....

Name of 1st Parent/Carer(s) **Signed**

Current address.....

Mobile No:.....

Name of 2nd Parent/Carer(s) **Signed**

Current address.....

Mobile No:.....

Please return the completed form to the school office. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether your request is authorised or not. Please do not confirm any holiday booking until you have confirmation of permission for the leave in term time from the Headteacher.

For Office Use Only

Date request for leave in term time received by school

Current Attendance.....%

Last Year's Attendance.....%

Number of unauthorised absence sessions during previous 10 school weeks

Re: **Siblings:** other schools confirmed?

What action are other schools taking?

.....

Leave in term time Agreed/Not Agreed

Request for leave is **agreed/is not agreed** for the above pupil to take leave during term time between the above dates.

Signed Job Title.....

Print Name Date

Notification of decision: Date letter sent to parent

Any notes:



Attendance Monitoring and Support Flow Chart

