



Attendance Policy

Date:	February 2019	Review:	February 2022
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1. Statement of Intent

At St Margaret Ward Catholic Primary School, we believe that attendance and punctuality at school are not only legal requirements but are fundamental to the children's development and achievement. Missing lessons leaves children at risk of falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

We work together with pupils and their families, offering support where necessary, to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved. Trafford Education Authority's target for attendance is 96%. At St Margaret Ward we have adopted this target for all pupils.

However, we will also take any further action considered necessary to improve attendance and to give our pupils the best chance to achieve.

2. Rights and responsibilities for attendance/punctuality

The Legal Framework:

There are legal obligations on:

- The parent(s) to secure education for their children, whether at school, to send them to school regularly once they are on the register.
- The School to register attendance and notify the Local Authority of absence from school.
- The Local Authority to provide education and to enforce attendance.

Local Authorities, schools, parents and the wider community all have a role to play in improving attendance. At St Margaret Ward, we have implemented procedures designed to ensure that all our pupils attend regularly.

Aims and Objectives:

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To demonstrate a strong attendance ethos.
- To have a clear policy on absence.
- To have effective systems for monitoring and analysing attendance.
- To use attendance data to improve school and pupil performance.
- To promote the importance and legal requirements of good attendance to pupils and their parents/guardians.
- To provide early intervention when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern.
- To have support systems in place for vulnerable pupils.
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality.
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance.

Procedures and Intervention Techniques:

We demonstrate a strong attendance ethos by having:

- A whole-school approach, which reinforces good attendance to encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.

- An Attendance Policy which is easily understood by all and is regularly updated and shared with all stakeholders.
- Appropriate attendance targets.
- Strong leadership on attendance with all staff seeing attendance as a shared responsibility.
- Allocated resources for the Pastoral Manager.
- Reporting of attendance issues to the Headteacher and Governors.
- A multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils/families.
- A graded response when attendance and/or punctuality drops below acceptable levels as stipulated in this policy.

3. Absence Procedures

We expect the parent/guardian to contact the school before 9.30am on each day that their child will be absent from school. If this does not happen, the school has a graded response system in place in which the following happens:

1. Text message sent to first contact for an absent child.
2. Telephone call made to first contact if no response received.
3. Further telephone call, including to other contacts for the pupil.
4. If no response, a home visit will be considered.

The progress through this response system will depend upon individual situations, taking account of previous and current concerns relating to safeguarding and attendance.

4. Classifying Absence

It is the school's decision to classify an absence as either authorised or unauthorised using the following guidelines.

Authorised Absence - An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent has informed the school as set out in this policy.

Unauthorised Absence - An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is deemed unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

If a parent/guardian does not follow the correct procedure for reporting absences ("...before 9.30am on each day that their child will be absent from school"), the absence may also be marked as unauthorised.

If a child's attendance is a cause for concern, then the school may ask for medical evidence as proof of illness.

5. Cause for Concern and Persistent Absence

A pupil's attendance becomes more of a cause for concern the further it falls below the school target of 96%. A 'persistent absentee' is when attendance falls to 90% or below across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The following graded response will be put in place:

1. Attendance falls below 95% for the current school year. Parents will be notified termly by letter that attendance has fallen below the school target of 96%.

2. Attendance falls below 93% for the current school year – Parents/guardians will be notified termly by letter that their child is in danger of falling in the persistent absence category.
3. Attendance falls below 90% for the current school year – The child is now a ‘persistent absentee’.
School will follow Government guidance and this will be dealt with promptly, working in partnership with parents/guardians to improve the child’s attendance.
Parents will be informed by letter and invited to a meeting between the school and parent/guardian.
During this meeting:
 - Reasons for persistent absence will be discussed and support offered where applicable.
 - Targets will be agreed and reviewed until that child is no longer in the persistent absence category.
 - There would be a focus on links between attendance and attainment.
 - A school/parent contract will be offered if deemed appropriate.
4. If the parent fails to attend the meeting, or there is no significant improvement in attendance, then the persistent absence issue will be escalated to the Education Welfare Officer.
5. If there continues to be no significant improvement in attendance and the pupil remains a ‘persistent absentee,’ then a penalty notice will be issued in accordance with Trafford guidelines.

6. Holidays in Term Time

Parents/guardians are strongly urged to avoid booking family holidays during term-time. They have a legal duty to make sure that their child attends the school **regularly** and is consistently punctual.

The Supreme Court judgement relating to *Isle of Wight v Platt* (2017) UKSC 28 made it clear that in Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996, attending school “regularly” means in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school. St Margaret Ward’s Headteacher and Governing Board have agreed the following constitutes regular attendance:

- Attendance of 96% and above for both the current academic year and their school career since reaching school age.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 specify that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be “exceptional circumstances”. If a headteacher grants leave, he or she should determine the number of days the child can be away from school.

Examples of exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted include:

- The funeral of a parent, grandparent or sibling.
- Visiting a gravely ill grandparent.
- Weddings of parents or siblings.

Unauthorised leave taken during term-time may result in a £60 penalty notice fine per pupil per parent. If the fine is not paid within 28 days, the fine will increase to £120. If the child’s absence has been recorded as sickness but is later proven that an unauthorised holiday has been taken, a penalty notice fine can also be issued after the child returns to school.

Should a holiday be taken when no written request has been made, a request for the implementation of a penalty notice will be made to the Local Authority.

Requests for holidays in term time must be requested by completing Exceptional Leave request form at least two weeks before the anticipated start date. This can be obtained from the school office. Once completed, the parent/carer must return the form to the office. The Headteacher will then write back indicating whether or not the request has been authorised.

Each request for a leave of absence is considered on its merits at the time. As each request has its individual circumstances, a decision does not set a precedent. Therefore, it does not mean that a similar request will be agreed in the future.

7. Medical Appointments

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, appointment cards/letters with times and dates should be shown at the school office and the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

8. Arrival and Registration

Classroom doors open at 8.45am and all children should be in school by 8.55am. If a child arrives after this time, he/she will be marked as late (L). The registers are closed at 9.05am. Children who arrive after the registers are closed, will be marked as on site but also as an unauthorised absence (U).

Children arriving after 8.55am must go through the main entrance where their parent/carer will have to sign them in at reception. Children must be accompanied to the office by an adult if late. It is unfair to expect children to report their late arrival themselves. Afternoon registration is taken at 12.50pm in KS1 and 1.20pm in KS2. The afternoon registers close at 1.00pm and 1.30pm respectively.

It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent/guardian outside the normal hours are signed in or out at the office.

9. Punctuality

Punctuality is vital to the education process. If a child is not present at the start of the day they can miss work, vital information and news for the day. This can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. Pupils arriving late also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn encourage absence. The Government has introduced new powers for the local authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases where parents do not take responsibility for ensuring their child arrives on time.

Persistent latecomers will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Persistent Lateness Procedures follow a graded response:

1. Phone call or face-to-face approach to parent/guardian is made to highlight the issue, determine the reason and to offer support to rectify the situation.
2. If lateness continues, a meeting will be called to discuss implications further.
3. If lateness after 9.05am is persistent, it will ultimately result in the parent/guardian receiving a fine from the Local Authority

10. Rewards

- A weekly sharing in assembly of each class attendance. A certificate and trophy for the best class attendance is awarded.
- Children with 100% termly attendance will receive an individual certificate at the end of term celebration assembly.
- Children with 100% attendance for the academic year are entered into a draw for the chance to win one of three cash prizes. All eligible children will receive a 100% attendance metal badge to wear.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Attendance records for individuals are monitored. These figures are included in the end-of-year reports of pupils.
- The Headteacher and Pastoral Manager will meet half-termly to look at attendance and punctuality for the whole school as well as for each class and for vulnerable groups. The graded response detailed in Section 5 and 9 of this policy will be put in place for children whose attendance is a cause for concern.
- The Headteacher will ensure that the policy is high profile throughout the year and especially at assemblies and new parents' meetings.
- Attendance and punctuality will be discussed at pupil progress meetings, with actions put in place to address particular issues with individual children.
- Attendance and punctuality figures are reported as part of the Headteacher's Report at termly Governing Board meetings. This will ensure the school is held accountable for the effectiveness of its policy.

12. Penalty Notices

In issuing fines, St Margaret Ward follow the guidelines and procedures in Trafford Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (published on our school website).

13. 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](#)