

St Matthew's RC High School

Attendance Policy



Reviewed: July 2015

To be reviewed: July 2017

ATTENDANCE POLICY

St Matthew's RC High School is dedicated to promoting a distinctive Catholic ethos by upholding the teachings of the Catholic Church. This means that everything we aim to achieve will be based on the teachings and practice of the Catholic Church.

Our motto is "Quaerite primum regnum dei" - "Seek first the Kingdom of God" - and our aim is to achieve this motto in our school life. We will work to build God's Kingdom and be happy together because we believe that Jesus died and rose again for us and that He is always present in our school and in our world.

We are committed to developing the full potential of every individual, regardless of culture, race, religion, disability, or special need by creating a safe, orderly environment where all members of the community work diligently in a spirit of co-operation and treat each other with courtesy and respect at all times.

Our primary role is to educate children and we uphold the principle outlined in the Bishop's Conference of England and Wales (2000) that:

"Education is holy ... the process of teaching and learning is a holy act"

At St Matthew's we recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and special educational needs. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

St Matthew's High School helps pupils to establish patterns of regular and punctual attendance. We ensure that responsibilities regarding attendance are made clear to parents and pupils. We make it clear that unauthorised absence is not tolerated.

We expect parents to telephone to tell us if their child is ill on the first day of absence, and then to write a short note to the Form Tutor when the pupil returns to school.

Absence from school during term time will only be authorised if there are exceptional personal circumstances.

We closely monitor the attendance of our pupils and identify any attendance concerns. Early intervention strategies are in place using appropriate measures to resolve attendance issues as soon as they arise. We are aware that absences may indicate a problem at school, home or both and act promptly to minimise impact on learning.

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday and remains so until the end of the academic year in which they are 16. From September 2015 all 16 year olds will be required to remain in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

KEY PERSONNEL:

The Governors:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters –if this does not happen it should be omitted.
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department of Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

The Leadership Team:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time

- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Use Manchester Local Authority's Early Help procedures to as a response to improve attendance and facilitate support for pupils and their families.
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated
- Deletions from the attendance register follow LA guidelines on 'Children Missing Education' and 'Removing a pupil from the Attendance register'
- The policy is reviewed and updated.

House Leaders ensure that:

- They are aware of the attendance issues within their House.
- In partnership with the relevant Pastoral Manager, they monitor the 90% (or less) attendance figures once a fortnight.
- They encourage their tutor team to make phone calls or meet with parents, when necessary, to improve attendance.
- They attend Attendance Planning Meetings when necessary.
- The subject of attendance has a high profile be mentioning in assemblies, form briefings and all meetings and rewarding high attendance.
- Pupils on fixed term exclusion are supported by the provision of work
- Pupils with long term medical problems are identified and the necessary strategies are implemented.

Pastoral managers ensure that:

- They are aware of the attendance issues within relevant Houses.
- Carry out follow up phone calls or home visits following a third day of absence (authorised or unauthorised)..
- In partnership with the relevant House leader and the Deputy Head, they monitor the 90% (or less) attendance figures once a fortnight.
- They attend Attendance Planning Meetings when necessary
- Use Manchester Local Authority's Early Help procedures to as a response to improve attendance and facilitate support for pupils and their families.

- Interventions used are documented to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.
- They support the House Leader with information for rewarding good attendance
- Pupils on fixed term exclusion are supported by the provision of work
- Pupils with long term medical problems are identified and the necessary strategies are implemented.
- He/she is available to answer any queries regarding attendance.
- He/she is available during the attendance 'sweeps' and 'swoops' to assist the Attendance Improvement Service.

Form Tutors ensure that:

- Daily registers are accurately taken for their tutor group within the agreed time frame.
- They are alert to patterns of attendance during the school day and follow up any unexplained absence during the school day.
- They contact parents and intervene early on if they have concerns.
- They meet with parents, should the need arise, to discuss attendance concerns.
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation

All teachers ensure that:

- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- They register the class accurately, within the first five minutes of a lesson on e-portal
- They inform the administration team if a pupil is missing from their lesson.
- They inform the tutor if a pupil is missing from their lesson and liaise on the suitable follow up.

The Admin Team ensures that:

- Ensure that Groupcall is used to contact parents of pupils with unexplained absences at 10am each morning.
- First day absence calls are made home when absence continues to be unexplained.
- Register list for ill absent staff are produced for period 5.
- Ensure that all period 5 registers have been recorded either on e-portal or on paper
- Record all period 5 paper registers by 3.05pm
- Ensure that information received from parent/carers regarding attendance issues is recorded accurately and with the appropriate level of details.
- Assist with the standard documentation used by the local authority should legal

proceedings be instigated.

All pupils ensure that:

- They attend school on a regular basis unless they are ill, or have other authorised reasons for not attending school.

All parents ensure that they :

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctor, dentist etc. outside of school hours and if this is not possible minimise the time their child is absent from school.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES:

- Anti-Bullying policy
- Behaviour policy
- Safeguarding
- Special Needs Policy

Success Criteria for Policy:

- Reduced figures for authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Reduced numbers of pupils classified as persistent absentees
- Improved figures for overall attendance.

Appendix 1

Escalation Process (2015/16)

Attendance Level	Action
Pupil's attendance falls below 96%	Form Tutor discussion and targets set for improvements in attendance
Pupil's attendance falls below 93%	Meeting with House Leaders to discuss ways to improve of attendance and targets set for a 4 week improvement. Letter home to parents.
Pupil's Attendance falls below 91%	Informal meeting with pupil's pastoral manager to review targets and support. (Possible warning of use of fixed penalty notice)
Pupil's attendance falls below 90%	Parents and pupil requested to attend Attendance panel with school staff. Formal referral to LA Core Attendance team for possible court proceedings

Appendix 2

Categories of Absence

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's House Leader will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Leave of Absence: From September 2013 head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

All requests for leave of absence must be made in writing. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing. Where a request has been granted the letter will state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur
- That the child's place may be withdrawn if the family do not return as expected

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child will lose their school place.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil still goes on leave, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may issue a Penalty Notice.

Religious Observance St Matthew's acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Study Leave Study leave may be granted for Year 11 pupils during GCSE examinations. School will offer in school study programmes during this period to reduce absence levels.

Traveller Absence The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Late Arrival Registration begins at 8:30 pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 10.00 am pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. Pupils should bring any appointment cards with them.

Unauthorised absence Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school. The authorisation of absence is the school's decision.

Appendix 3

Support Systems

St Matthew's School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Saint Matthew's also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels
- Parenting contracts
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Saint Matthew's will refer the case to the local authority attendance team for possible use of legal sanctions.

Appendix 4

Legal Sanctions

Prosecution Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Parenting Contract Protocol.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £60 fine is paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.