



Attendance Policy

St Thomas Church of England Academy

Approved by:	Board of Trustees	Date:	12 th December 2022
Last reviewed:	March 2024		
Next review due by:	March 2025		

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Children are at the heart of everything we do. Through Christian values, relationships and living and learning together we celebrate the uniqueness and diversity of everyone in our family. We nurture a sense of self belief, mutual respect and belonging to build the foundations for happy and successful life-long learning.

1. Introduction

Your child is at the heart of everything that we do. We strive to ensure a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment. We aim to be a nurturing community that promotes our four values of friendship, faith, love and trust. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils. We believe good progress depends on good attendance. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. This policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Working together to improve attendance.

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

2. Why regular attendance is important.

Absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a legal responsibility and absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and could result in prosecution.

Here are some ways that you can support your child's attendance:

- Ensuring regular and appropriate bedtimes.
- Helping with additional learning at home.
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before.
- Providing a healthy breakfast.
- Reporting any academic or social concerns to us quickly.
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive).
- Book medical appointments outside if the school day wherever possible.
- Ensure that the school has up to date contact details.
- Avoid holidays in term time.
- Work with the school to improve matters if attendance becomes a problem.

Here are some ways that we will support you your child's attendance:

- Work in partnership with you to overcome any attendance issues.
- Be compassionate and supportive in exceptional circumstances of absence.
- Give you details on attendance in our newsletter, website and Class dojo.
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance in school, with all staff members playing an important role in doing this.
- Share ideas and resources with you which can have a positive effect on your child's attendance.
- Act early to address patterns in attendance.
- Utilise the support of available specialists in relation to attendance if required.

If your child is absent from school, they will miss out on learning that is difficult to catch up.

Attendance percentage	Lessons missed	Time missed
95%	50	10 days (two weeks)
90%	100	4 weeks
85%	150	Almost 6 weeks
80%	200	Just over 7 weeks (half a term)
75%	250	Almost 9 weeks

3. Why being punctual is important.

If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss important opportunities to prepare for the day and be ready to learn.

Minutes late per day	Equivalent of missing
5 minutes	3.4 days a year
10 minutes	6.9 school days

15 minutes	10.3 school days
20 minutes	13.8 school days
30 minutes	20.7 school days

It is important for all children to have a positive start to every school day. Late arriving pupils can disrupt this routine and can cause the child arriving late to be embarrassed and feeling negative. Class teachers will often use the registration time to recap important learning, which if missed can impact on the rest of the day.

The school day starts at 8:35am and finishes at 3:15pm. All children should be supervised when on school site by an adult before 8:35am (unless attending Breakfast Club) and after 3:15pm (unless attending After School or Sunshine Club).

If a child is late, the school gate has been locked but the registers are still open, they must come into school through the main office where a member of the office staff will make a note of their name and their year group. This will be recorded so that consistent lateness can be monitored.

If a child is late and the register is closed the parent/carer will be asked to fill in a short form (Punctuality Form) explaining why their child is late. These will be kept and monitored by the Attendance Officer. The Attendance Officer will continue to monitor. If there are consistent punctuality problems parents/carer will be invited to meet with a Senior Leader or the Attendance Officer to try and rectify the problem in partnership.

4. Understanding types of absence

Unauthorised absences

These are absences which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Examples of this are:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Excessive illness without medical evidence.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, never cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and can often, make things worse. Be honest with us and we will do everything we can to support you.

Planned Absences

Sometimes a planned absence is unavoidable, such as some medical appointments or similar. However, we encourage appointments outside of the school day wherever possible. Please be aware that under certain circumstances proof of a medical appointment may be required.

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. The office staff will liaise with the parents regarding the decision.

Religious observance – requests will usually be granted for a maximum of three days during a year for ‘a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs’ (Pupil Registration). These days should relate to significant festivals in the relevant faith calendar.

5. Absence procedures

If your child is absent, you must contact us by 9.30am or as soon as is practically possible on the first day of absence via:

- Calling the school office staff on 0121 622 2151.
- Emailing the school office staff on stthomas@allsaintsmat.school.

If you have not notified us, we will:

- Call the contact numbers that you have provided us with to establish a reason for the absence.
- A voicemail will be left in there is no answer and a text message and/or email will also be sent.
- If we are concerned about your child’s welfare, we may carry out a home visit.
- If the family cannot be reached, then the school will contact the Education Legal Intervention Team or Children’s Advice and Support Service (CASS). The police will be called if we think the child is in immediate danger.
- If absence without contact continues a referral to the Children Missing in Education (CME) will be made.

6. Attendance Register

We will keep an 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 also at the start the second session, after lunch. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present or absent.
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- Any amendment to the attendance register will include:
 - The original entry.
 - The amended entry.
 - The reason for the amendment.
 - The date on which the amendment was made.
 - The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not.
- The nature of the activity if 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 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive at school by **8.50am** on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at **8.50am** and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at **1.00pm**.

Pupils are marked late (L) if they arrive 15 minutes or more after these times. Registers are officially closed half an hour after these times and pupils are marked as 'Unauthorised absence (U) if they arrive later, unless an acceptable authorised reason is given.

7. Reporting to parents/carers

- Initially, a text will be sent to the parent of any child whose attendance is below the national average, this will state the current percentage along with how many days this equates to.
- This is followed by a letter from the Attendance Officer or a Senior Leader outlining the importance of good attendance and expressing the school's concerns about poor attendance.
- If attendance does not improve an informal meeting between parents and a Senior Leader or the Pastoral Manager will take place. In this meeting the parents/carers will be asked to sign a Parenting Contract. A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between a parent/carer, the school and the Local Authority, in order to improve the attendance of children and young people. This intervention clearly identifies actions, with all parties named being accountable for their roles and responsibilities. At each meeting an agreement is drawn up based upon the full assessment of the situation. This agreement clearly identifies each party's responsibilities for resolving the problem. (Appendix 2)
- The family may be offered Early Help which consists of an Early Help Assessment which helps identify the support required.
- Continued absence will result in a School Attendance Review Meeting (SARM).
- Legal action will be taken in extreme circumstances. It is an offence to secure regular attendance at school for a registered pupil under Section 4441A of the Education Act 1996.

8. Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. Local Councils and schools can use various legal powers if a child is missing school without good reason. They can give you:

- A Parenting Order – this means that you must attend parenting classes. You will also have to do what the court says to improve your child's attendance.
- An Education Supervision Order – this is issued if the Council thinks you need support, but you are not cooperating. A supervisor will be appointed to help you get your child back into education. The Council can do this instead of or as well as prosecute you.
- A School Attendance Order – this will be issued if the Council think that your child is not getting an education. You have 15 days to provide evidence that you've registered your child with the school listed in the order or that you are giving them a 'home education'. If not, you could be fined or prosecuted.

- A fine (sometimes known as a Penalty Notice). If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may consider:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

9. Attendance monitoring

Attendance and absence are monitored daily by the school office and the Attendance Officer. The Attendance Officer analyses the data on a weekly basis and identifies pupils/families that may need additional support.

Cohort data is monitored and analysed half termly by the Attendance Officer and the Designated Senior Lead for Attendance. They look at any historic and emerging patterns and absence and then develop strategies to address these patterns. These interventions are carefully evaluated for impact.

Attendance data at cohort level is presented to governors at each Local Academy Board meeting, along with any strategies currently employed to manage specific attendance.

10.Reducing persistent or 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.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

Specific strategies to be used:

- Text to be sent to the parent of any child who is below the national average.
- Informal meeting between parents and the Pastoral Manager/Attendance Officer.
- Letter from the Pastoral Manager/Attendance Officer to be sent outlining the importance of good attendance.
- Formal letter requesting a meeting with the Attendance Officer and the Designated Senior Lead for Attendance.
- School Attendance Review Meeting.
- Legal action will be taken in extreme cases.

11.Strategies for promoting attendance

We believe that at primary level, children are most often not responsible for their attendance and punctuality, and that it is a parental responsibility. As such, we do not celebrate 100% attendance as this

could affect some children's self-esteem. We do, however, celebrate certain elements of attendance if it is appropriate. Internal punctuality is rewarded through Dojos.

12. Legislation

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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:

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

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

13. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Designated Senior Lead for Attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Academy Board.

14. Links to other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

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

Appendix 2: Attendance Contract

Date and time of meeting:	
Venue:	

Pupil name:	
Date of birth:	
Address:	
School:	
Present at meeting:	

Actions agreed
<p><i>Example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil will arrive at school by 8.30am every day (free breakfast club offered) • Parent/carer will inform the school on the first day of a sickness absence by 9.00am. • Parent/carer will provide medical evidence for every sickness absence the pupil may incur. • Are any issues preventing the pupil attending regularly? If so, school staff will be informed.

Attendance target:	100%
Timescale for improvement:	

Date for review meeting:	
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I confirm that this Attendance Action Plan was agreed to by all present.

Signed:

	Parent/carer
	Pupil
	School representative

