



St Thomas More Catholic First School

Attendance Policy

Learning, loving and living together with Christ

St Thomas More Catholic First School aims for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence.

Our attendance goal is 96%

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** that the school is open. In order to achieve our goal of 96%, every child's attendance must not fall below that level.

WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS SO IMPORTANT

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of other children in the class too.

Ensuring your child's attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL PERCENTAGES

This may help with understanding:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks

90% equates to a day off every two weeks

85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks

80% equates to one whole day every week

A secondary aged child whose attendance is 80% will have missed one whole year of education by the time they leave school!

PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

In order to achieve our attendance goal of 96%, school, parents and children need to work together.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day;

- Attend school punctually;
- Attend school with all the appropriate equipment e.g. PE kit, reading books, swimming kit

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibility;
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day;
- Ensure that they contact the school daily of any absence, before 10am;
- Notify school immediately upon the child's return in writing of the reasons for the child's absence;
- Notify the school immediately of any change to emergency contact details.

We expect the school will:

- Provide a safe, welcoming learning environment;
- Keep regular and accurate records of am and pm attendance and punctuality both for individual children and whole school;
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend (if no message has been received to explain absence);
- Encourage good attendance through a system of reward and recognition;
- Regularly inform parents/carers of the percentage attendance of all pupils;
- Inform parents/carers of their child's punctuality and poor attendance via letter;
- Make unannounced home visits where reasons are not given for non-attendance or where reasons given are unacceptable.

Understanding types of absence

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent) and this is why we ask parents to inform us in writing as well by telephone or in person, the reason for any absence.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for an unavoidable reason such as

- Illness
- Hospital appointments
- **Emergency** doctor or dental appointments.

Unauthorised absences are those which are not considered reasonable and for which no leave has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Children arriving too late at work to get a mark;
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed;
- Staying at home because other family members are unwell;
- Buying school uniform or shoes;
- Children acting as translators;
- Picking up or taking relatives to the airport.

Whilst any child may be too unwell to attend school, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Keeping them at home for this reason does not solve this issue and is best sorted with the school as soon as possible.

NON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN TERM TIME

The Department for Education has from the 1st September 2013 announced that parents have no right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time.

Any application for leave must be made in exceptional circumstances by completing a leave of absence form, which can be obtained from the school office. The form will then be discussed with you at an appointment with the Head Teacher or Parent Link Teacher.

The Head Teacher will consider each application individually and decide if it warrants exceptional circumstances. The factors taken into consideration will be:

- The pupils' general absence/attendance record;
- Length of proposed leave;
- Pupils educational needs;
- Circumstances of the request;
- Purpose of the leave;
- Frequency of the activity;
- When the request was made;
- Pupils ability to catch up with work;

- Proximity of SATS and tests;
- Timing within the term;
- Age of pupil.

We authorise absence for religious reasons on the same basis as for leave of absence.

Parents will be fined by means of Penalty Notices or Prosecutions in the Magistrates Court by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 per parent per child. If the fine is not paid within 20 days it rises to £120 per parent per child. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.

The school may ask the Authority to initiate court action under section 444 of the education act 1996 which could lead to fines of up to £2500 or even imprisonment.

In some cases, action may be taken under the Children's Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

LATENESS AND PUNCTUALITY

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the beginning of the day they can miss work. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

The school day begins at 8.45 am and we expect your child to be in school at that time. Register are taken at 8.55 am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

If your child arrives after 9am and the doors are shut then please escort your child to the front office and sign them in. Please give a reason for lateness (not 'late').

At 9.30am registers are closed and children arriving after that time (unless by previous agreement) will receive an 'L' code showing they are on site but the lateness is not authorised. This may mean that you may face a penalty notice if the problem persists.

Attendance and punctuality are monitored weekly by the attendance team.

Vulnerable children

Children who are LAC (Looked After Children), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP), Children In Need (CIN) will be treated with the highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Officer. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately with a telephone call and a visit to the home. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised and learning supported as much as possible.

Children who fail to attend or cease to attend without prior notification:

If after 10 days continuous absence, school has been unable to locate the whereabouts of a child, we will refer to the Local Authority for further checks that are not available to school. If

after 20 days continued unexplained absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced then they will be removed from the school roll. If the child fails to start after being allocated a place they will also have checks run. If the school is unable to make contact with the family after 10 days, the Local Authority will be contacted. In both cases the child will be treated as CME (Child Missing in Education).

Attendance percentages reported in end of year reports

100%- Excellent

91%-99%-Good

90%-or below-Poor

Punctuality percentages on end of term reports

0 late marks-Excellent

1 Late marks-Very good

2 late marks-Good

Up to 10 late marks –Developing

More than 10 late marks-Poor

School Attendance Team:

Ms I Bromley and Mrs T Gration	Attendance Administration
Mrs J Hicking	Parent Link Teacher
Mrs N Jones	Assistant Head
Miss T Moriani	Head Teacher
Mrs P Lailey	Governor

Reviewed: October 2016

Review: October 2017