



# ST THOMAS CATHOLIC ACADEMIES TRUST

## Attendance policy

### Our Lady's Catholic Primary School



Approved by:	Mr Mark Holdsworth	Date: 11 <sup>th</sup> October 2022
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## 1. Aims

All that we do in our family of schools is defined by our Mission and our Vision:

- **Our Mission:** 'The glory of God is a human being fully alive!' (St Irenaeus)
- **Our Vision:** Human flourishing and the uniqueness of every individual as a child of God is at the heart of our Catholic educational enterprise. In this context, a human being fully alive is one who is open to faith – to love – to joy – and to learning. They are daily becoming the person God created them to be and they are ready to delight in their God-given gifts, and to use them in the service of the Common Good.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also:

- promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.
- support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Regular attendance in our schools is defined as being at least in line with national averages for attendance in each phase of schooling. Attendance that falls below this level will be the focus of support and intervention. Our schools do not aspire to regular attendance, we aspire to excellent attendance.

Excellent attendance is defined as being in line with national averages for all student groups and an overall level of attendance that is significantly above the national average. School and Trust leaders are encouraged to challenge attendance that is less than excellent.

Students who are 'fully alive' will be full participants in school life and will look forward to their time in school. Where there are barriers to attendance, they will be examined, every effort made to understand them and to provide solutions. Through the application of this policy, we will unlock the potential of each child to truly delight in their God-given gifts and recognise this is only possible where a child attends school regularly and punctually.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

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 complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 The Local Academy Committee

The Local Academy Committee is responsible for:

- › Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- › Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- › Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- › Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- › Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- › Holding the headteachers/heads of school to account for the implementation of this policy

### 3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- › 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

### 3.3 The school attendance officer

The school attendance officer at each school is responsible for:

- › Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- › 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 and the headteacher

- › Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- › Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Miss Linda Mansfield and can be contacted via 01494 726 390 or by email [lmansfield@olschesham.co.uk](mailto:lmansfield@olschesham.co.uk)

### 3.6 Class teachers

All class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9.15am each morning.

### 3.7 Office staff

Office staff will:

- › Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

### 3.8 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- › Make sure their child attends every day on time
- › Call the school to report their child's absence before 9.30am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- › Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their children
- › Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### 3.9 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- › Attend school every day on time

## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 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 once during the second session. It will mark 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 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 in school by 8.55am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm for Key Stage 1 and 1.30pm for Key Stage 2.

## 4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15 am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office. (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide 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 the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parent/carer will be notified of this in advance.

## 4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers 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/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## 4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

## 4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If we cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, we may contact 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
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

## 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels through termly reports.

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

A headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils 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.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as for example attending a funeral or other religious services.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account 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 3 weeks before the absence, the headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, barges (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

### 5.2 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.

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 or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- 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.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

### 6.1 Challenging poor attendance and punctuality

- Parents should inform the school office of the reason for their child's absence by the start of the school day on the first day of absence. Notification can be made by phone or email.
- A child's attendance should be monitored carefully and if it falls below 93% or if the Office Manager notices a pattern of non-attendance; e.g. regular absence on a Monday. The school will write to parents and inform them that their child's attendance has dropped below 93% and is a cause for concern. Parents will also be informed in this letter that their child's attendance is being closely monitored and further action will be taken if attendance continues to fall.
- If the pupil's attendance does not improve then a meeting will be set up between the headteacher and the pupil's parents. At this meeting the importance of good attendance should be stressed and the reasons for the absences discussed to see if any support can be offered. At this meeting parents will be asked to bring any evidence (e.g. medical letters) to explain the reasons for their child's poor attendance. Parents will also be informed at this meeting that any further absences will require evidence (e.g. Doctor's note, proof of prescription, letter of appointment/meeting) to support the reason for their child's absence. Without it the absences will be recorded as unauthorised. After the meeting the child's attendance will be monitored closely by the Office Manager. A support plan will be written to help the family improve the child's attendance. If the child's attendance does not improve then the matter may be referred to the School Attendance Officer at Buckinghamshire Council who will contact the parents regarding this matter.
- In serious cases of poor attendance (below 85%) the school may request the involvement of the Local Authority Attendance Officer. This may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued to parents. In more serious cases the Attendance Officer can consider sending parents to court.
- All meetings with parents regarding attendance will be recorded and information regarding a child's absence will be shared with the class teacher.

### 6.2 Celebrating excellent attendance and punctuality

- The class with the best attendance in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 will receive an ice cream at the end of the year.
- Any child with 100% attendance will get a box of maltesers at the end of the year.

## 7. Attendance monitoring

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not 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 Local Academy Committee.

## 7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

## 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to the headteacher to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

## 7.4 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.

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 (and/or local authority) 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
- Provide parents with regular whole school attendance data.

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum bi-annually by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Academy Committee.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy



## 10. Equalities monitoring

<p>To what extent does this policy have any implications for people of relevant protected characteristics (RPC) as outlined below?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Gender reassignment</li> <li>• Marriage and civil partnership</li> <li>• Pregnancy and maternity</li> <li>• Religion or belief</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Sexual orientation</li> </ul> <p>(Equality Act, 2010)</p>	<p><b>Assessment:</b></p> <p>This policy is applied in the context of the Object for our Academy Trust as set out in the Articles of Association and Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>There is no other intentional impact on protected characteristics.</p>
<p>Will this policy advantage or disadvantage any particular group?</p>	<p>Collecting data for all “groups” will disadvantage those students whose attendance is lower than non-RPC students by identifying them as being in needs of support which will enable them to achieve as well as non-RPC students.</p>
<p>How will this policy, if relevant, promote equality of opportunity across our school?</p>	<p>Improving the attendance of any ‘group’ will lead to greater equality of outcome and therefore improved relations between all groups of students.</p>
<p>Success criteria and monitoring</p>	<p><b>Success criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress is being made towards meeting attendance targets.</li> <li>• Rates of authorised and unauthorised absence are minimized and at or below national averages.</li> <li>• The attendance of groups identified as having a particular problem will show improvement following relevant interventions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Monitoring:</b></p> <p>Local Academy Committees will review this annually.</p>

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

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

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

		absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	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)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	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
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day