

# St Thomas More Primary School

## Attendance Policy Reviewed Annually



<b>Committee responsible for review</b>	<b>Governing Board</b>
Agreed date	July 2024
Review date	July 2025



## Attendance Policy

### Introduction

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, regular attendance is crucial for academic success and personal development. This policy outlines our expectations and procedures regarding pupil attendance to ensure all children have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- 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

In order for any attendance and punctuality policy to be effective it must be consistently applied throughout the whole school, by its staff, pupils' and parents.

### Why regular attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of your child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning and achievement. Any pupils' absence disrupts teaching routines which may affect the learning of others in the same class. When children miss vital key learning objectives, it can be impossible to catch up, placing them at a disadvantage to their peers.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal and parental responsibility. Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence in law and may result in a Penalty Notice being issued or Court action/prosecution.

Research has shown that regular attendance and good punctuality are key factors in children achieving their full potential at school.

### Attendance and Punctuality in the Early Years:

Establishing good habits from the start will help your child to settle more quickly and build good habits for later life. Coming to school on time, every day helps to develop confidence.

Research has shown that, even at the earliest age, children with poor attendance and punctuality are at a disadvantage later in life. They generally find it harder to make and maintain friendships, they achieve less and they often suffer from poor self-esteem.

The school keeps a register of attendance for every child. This is a legal document and record and classifies every half-day attendance and/or absence. Absences are classified

as either authorised or unauthorised. For this reason, the school will ask parents/carers for the reason for each absence.

### Every School Day Counts

Although being absent cannot always be helped as we all do become ill from time to time, please take a look at the table below to show you exactly how much time your child could be missing.

365 Days in a Year	190 School Days in Total	Absence
100% Attendance	190 Days	0
95% Attendance	180 Days	2 Weeks
90% Attendance	171 Days	4 Weeks
85% Attendance	161 Days	6 Weeks
80% Attendance	152 Days	More than half a term
75% Attendance	143 Days	9+ Weeks

### Promoting regular attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parent, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will give you details on attendance in our newsletter and website.

### Safeguarding:

Effective attendance procedures are integral to ensuring all children are kept safe. Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interest of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: - Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying.

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

### The Law Relating to Attendance:

#### Legislation

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal and parental responsibility. Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence in law and may result in a Penalty Notice being issued (Section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003) or Court action/prosecution (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996)

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable: -

- a. To age, ability and aptitude
- b. To any special educational needs, they may have either by regular attendance to school or otherwise.

If you wish to find out more information about the legislation around attendance, please visit:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/564599/school\\_attendance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf)

### **Understanding Types of Absence:**

Every-half day absence from school has to be classified by the Head teacher (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

**Authorised absences** are mornings and/or afternoons away from school for an acceptable reason, where the Head teacher approves an 'authorised leave of absence', such as due to illness, medical/dental appointments which cannot be made outside of school time or unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

In order to enable the school to automatically authorise an absence due to illness, parents/carers are recommended to;

- **Provide medical evidence to the school. This can be in the form of GP/Hospital/Medical/Dental Appointment letters/cards, Copies of prescriptions/antibiotics issued (providing the child's name is indicated there on).**

In order to enable the school to authorise an absence due to an emergency or unavoidable cause, parents/carers are requested to;

- **Speak to the Attendance Officer/Head Teacher, advise them of the issue and request the absence be authorised.**
- **Complete a leave of absence request letter obtained from the school office**
- **Attend a meeting with the Attendance Officer/Head teacher, upon request, to discuss the matter.**

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which the Head teacher does 'not' approve an "authorised leave of absence". This type of absence can lead to the use of sanctions and/or referring to the Local Authority for legal intervention.

### **Unauthorised absences are;**

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Parents/carers not communicating the reason for absence to the school
- Absences which have never been properly explained or evidenced
- Parents not providing medical evidence to the school to support the absence as being due to ill health
- Child who arrive at school after the Registration period has ended
- Truancy before or during the school day

- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips, holidays or overseas trips in term time

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 sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

\*Please approach us at any time, if you are experiencing problems getting your child to school.

### **Absence in Term Time:**

Holidays or overseas trips in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking their children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday/overseas trip in school time, are offset by the cost to your child's education. Because of the damage to your child's learning caused by this, **we do not authorise any holidays/overseas trips in term time.**

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off school to go on holiday/overseas trip.

**\*The Head teacher will request you meet with the parent, to discuss the implications associated with an absence due to a holiday/overseas trip during term time.**

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA) – A national threshold set by the Government:**

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling from the beginning of the school year **for whatever reason** (this includes authorised and unauthorised absences). Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence rigorously. Any child's absences that are at risk of moving towards or reaching the PA threshold, is given priority attention and you will be informed of this immediately.

Projected PA children are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance system. All our PA children and their parents are subject to an Intervention Plan. All potential and actual PA cases are also automatically made known to the Attendance Advisory Officer and some cases may lead to a referral to the Attendance Advisory Service of the Local Authority, whereby legal action could be initiated.

### **Absence Procedure:**

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence, advising of the reason and likely length of absence, either by calling the school office on [school number](#) or emailing [email address](#). (A phone call will be made to parents each time the child has been marked with an unauthorised absence code and no reason has been given for the absence).
- Contact the school on the subsequent days of absence as necessary.
- Provide evidence where possible, supporting the reason for absence.

### **What School will do if Attendance is a Concern:**

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share with governors

- Letters will be sent to parents to alert them to the concerns school has about their child's attendance and/or punctuality: Firstly a message will be sent with an expression of concern that their child has met the criteria for attending less than 95%. There will then be a letter of concern monitoring attendance under 95%
- Invite you into the school to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer / Head Teacher.
- Undertake interventions and offer support where possible/appropriate, through school resources and/or outside agencies.
- Use Royal Borough of Greenwich's Guidance to Improve Attendance.
- Undertake Home visits, as necessary.
- Hold Pre referral meetings to address irregular school attendance, in the presence of the Officer from the Attendance Advisory Service of the Local Authority.
- Undertake a referral to the Attendance Advisory Service if your child's **unauthorised** absence reaches 10% or more.

### **The Attendance Advisory Officer:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the school staff in resolving any problems related to attendance together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved this way, and unauthorised absences continue, the school may refer to the Attendance Advisory Service. The Attendance Advisory Officer will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve your child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the Attendance Advisory Service can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or Prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Parents may wish to contact the Attendance Advisory Service themselves to seek advice or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 020 8921 8510.

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and is categorised as ‘irregular school attendance’. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss spending time with their peers, their class teacher and getting vital information/news for the day. The Late arrival of a child(ren) disrupts lessons, places the child at a disadvantage and can be embarrassing for them. All of which can contribute to a reluctance to attend school.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at **9am**. We expect all children to be in class at that time. Our school gates open at 8.50am to allow children to start to come into the building.

At **9.15am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

Poor punctuality is classified as ‘irregular school attendance’ and action will be undertaken to address it, following the schools attendance procedure.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the School Attendance Officer/Head teacher, to address and hopefully resolve the problem.

\*Please approach us at any time if you are experiencing problems getting your child to school on time.

### **Every Minute Counts**

As well as being absent a lot from school effecting your child’s development, being late also has a big effect on their learning time, please look at the table below:

<b>Lateness = Lost Learning</b> (figures below are calculated over the school year)	
5 mins late each day	3 days lost
10 mins late each day	6.5 days lost
15 mins late each day	10 days lost
20 mins late each day	13 days lost
30 mins late each day	19 days lost

### **School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives:**

The school also has targets to improve whole school attendance and punctuality and your child has an important part to play in meeting targets.

The minimum level of attendance and punctuality for this school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child’s attendance and punctuality compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

### **Strategies the school uses to promote regular attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. The strategies below outline how we achieve the aim of regular and punctual attendance for all.

- All new parents will be told about the school expectations with regard to attendance
- At the end of each term those pupils who have achieved 100% attendance will receive a certificate
- Each week the class in KS1/2 with closest to 100% attendance will be awarded a class certificate and will get to keep the attendance trophy in their classroom for that week
- Those children at the end of the school year with 100% will have an end of year treat outside of school to reward their outstanding attendance
- Targets for the school for attendance and punctuality are displayed around the school, on newsletters and on the school website
- The class teacher, on the end of year record, will add comments on attendance and punctuality. They will also report on attendance and punctuality at Parents' Evenings
- Where there has been a marked improvement in attendance of particular students, a letter of recognition may be sent to the parent/s, and a certificate given to the pupil
- The designated Attendance Lead/Assistant Head Teacher with responsibility for attendance will work closely with parents, the school attendance officer for the Royal Borough of Greenwich and the child to improve poor performance, in line with borough and national policies

### **Rewards**

Children with 100% attendance will be awarded during an end of year assembly where they are presented with a certificate and badge as well as attending a celebratory school trip.

### **Communication – What we Need to Know:**

#### **Telephone Numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we have always got up to date phone numbers for yourself and emergency contacts, for if you are unavailable.

#### **Home Address:**



Let us know when you move and where you are moving to. As well as this please let us know if you are away on business and another family member is taking care of your child and most importantly we have those contact details in case of an emergency.

### **Removing a Pupil from Our School:**

If you move home and/or make the decision to transfer your child to another school, for whatever reason and have given the relevant notice period to the school, as a matter of priority you need to provide the school with all of the necessary details.

\*If you are leaving the country, please provide to school, a copy of your flight tickets and the address you are relocating to.

We need to know your new address (if relevant) and the school your child is transferring to. If we do not receive this information and your child ceases to attend our school, they become a '**Child Missing in Education**'.

### **Child Missing Education (CME)**

Any child who ceases to attend a school, without notification as to their new address and/or the school they are transferring to, becomes a '**Child Missing in Education**'. Any child in this category is reported to the Child Missing Education Officer at the Local Authority, who will follow up the matter under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 and Safeguarding legislation, as necessary. This can involve the Police, Social Care and International Social Services, if required.

The attendance procedures are crucial to ensuring the safety of all children. If a child has been absent from school for 20 consecutive days without good reason and their whereabouts are unknown, the school has a legal obligation to report the child as missing education to the relevant local authority. In accordance with DFE regulations the child may be removed from the school roll.

### **Elective Home Education:**

Whilst you consider elective home education as an option for your child(ren), please request a meeting with the Head teacher, to discuss the matter fully.

If you make the decision to educate your child at home, you are required to advise us of this in writing (letter or email).

Once your letter/email is received, we will make a referral to the Elective Home Education (EHE) Officer of the Local Authority, who will make contact with you regarding this matter. Upon confirmation from the EHE Officer, we will remove your child(ren) from the school roll.

If a letter/email is not received, your child remains on the roll of the school and their absence is treated as unauthorized. \*Action to address the unauthorised absence, will be followed as detailed above.

### **The people responsible for attendance matters in the school are:**

Head Teacher

School Office Administrator

RBG Attendance Advisory Officer

### **Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to ensure procedures are in place to support good attendance and punctuality. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly (every day and on time).

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

### **Appendix 1**

#### **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](#)

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

**Appendix 2**

## Penalty Notice Fines for School Attendance are changing

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

### Per Parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent, for each child that was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

### National Threshold

There will be a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence.

The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years.

### First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

### Second Offence

#### (within 3 years)

The Second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

### Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court. Prosecution can result in criminal records and fines of up to £2,500.

Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

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

<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, due to the work of their parent, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday/overseas trip, 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

**Appendix 4 Request for leave of absence during term time**

REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

Dear Parents and Carers,

The Department for Education has amended the regulations and guidance in relation to absences in term time; there is no automatic right to take your child out of school during term time.

From 1st September 2013, the Department of Education only allowed a Headteacher to grant a leave of absence if there are exceptional circumstances. In determining whether or not an absence in such circumstances can be authorised, it is for the Headteacher to determine the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

If you are requesting absence during term time, you will need to complete the form on the reverse of this notification and a response will be sent to you as soon as possible. If the absence requested is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance, and you nevertheless take your child out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in line with Local Authority guidance.

**Please note – If a child’s attendance drops below 90% then all absences (other than sickness, with medical evidence) thereafter will be unauthorised. The Royal Borough of Greenwich will then consider Court proceedings against parents and carers.**

Any absence from school disrupts your child’s learning. You may consider some absences to be educational but your child will still miss out on the teaching that their classmates will receive. Children returning from an absence are unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed. Whilst teachers try to help children catch up on missed work this is not always successful and therefore increases the risk of your child underachieving. In addition to this, children sometimes feel less comfortable in their friendship groups after a long absence.

**This request should be returned to the school a minimum of 5 days before the start of the absence.**

I hope you will support our efforts to raise attendance and attainment at our school.

Yours faithfully

L Collins  
Headteacher

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

If you wish to remove your child from school during term time, please complete and return this form to the school no less than **14 days** before the requested absence.

Child's Name .....Year .....

First date of absence .....Date of return to school .....

Exceptional circumstances are as follows:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Signed .....Date .....

PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME

.....

(Please ensure you are giving at least 14 days' notice of the requested absence)

-----  
Child's Name ..... Year .....

AUTHORISED: Your request has been authorised for the following dates:

\_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_ to \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_

UNAUTHORISED: Your request has been unauthorised for the following dates:

\_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_ to \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_

It is not considered that the circumstances you describe are exceptional.

Signed .....Headteacher Date .....