



# Attendance Policy

**This policy was reviewed in January 2024**  
**This policy was approved by the Governing Body in March 2024**  
**This policy will be reviewed by March 2025**  
*(unless any changes are necessary prior to this date)*

## **BELONGING | BELIEVING | ACHIEVING**

“You are the light of the world.”

*Matthew 5:14*

### **I. AIMS**

In line with our school vision, we are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also 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.

Our school target for pupil attendance each academic year is 96%.

96%+	Excellent attendance	
94%-96%	Very good attendance	96% = 8 days missed a year
90%-94%	Satisfactory attendance	95% = 10 days missed a year 94% = 12 days missed a year
Below 90%	Concerns (additional support may be necessary)	93% = 14 days missed a year 92% = 16 days missed a year 91% = 18 days missed a year 90% = 20 days missed a year

## **2. 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:

**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.

## **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **3.1 The Governing Body**

The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Executive Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **3.2 The Executive Headteacher**

The Executive 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
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3.2 The Head of School for Inclusion**

The Head of School for Inclusion is responsible for:

- Monitoring school-level absence data
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3.3 The Administration Staff**

The office staff is responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the Head of School for Inclusion in the first instance and then onto the Executive Headteacher

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- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Working with the Head of School for Inclusion or Executive Headteacher about issuing fixed-penalty notices

### **3.4 Class Teachers**

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office via our Management Information System (Arbor).

### **3.5 School Office Staff**

School Office staff take calls or emails from parents about absence and record the reason for absence on the registers on Arbor.

## **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 I for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school doors open at 8.45am and pupils must arrive in school by 9am on each school day.

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The register for the first session will be taken at 9am and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm for Early Years and Years 1-3 and 2pm for Years 4,5,6.

### **4.2 Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7) and on each day thereafter with an update, if possible. We ask that parents notify the school of the absence by email, phone call or text.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless pupil attendance has fallen below 90% or if there are patterns of absence that cause concern (eg the first or last day of the holidays). In order to authorise absence for illness, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, appointment text, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence.

If the school is not satisfied about the information provided about the illness absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

Absence codes and procedures will apply to children in Nursery and Reception pupils of non-compulsory school age

### **4.3 Planned absence**

We encourage parents/carers to make routine 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, preferably at the start or end of the school day, or during their lunch break

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 and provides medical evidence of such appointment.

The pupil's parent/carer must apply in writing 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 (L)
- After the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (U)

We understand that there may be occasionally circumstances which cause pupils to be late and these will be treated with support and consideration. However our expectation is that

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every pupil is on time for school each day. When a child misses the start of the school day, they miss vital settling in time, teaching time and important morning work. A late arrival can also be quite disruptive to the rest of the class.

When a child is persistently late:

- the office staff will contact the parent/ carer informally to bring this to the parent's attention and will seek support of the parent/ carer to improve punctuality
- if the pupil's punctuality does not improve, then the parent/carer will be contacted in writing
- if punctuality still does not improve, the parent/ carer will be asked to attend a meeting with the office staff and a support plan will be agreed
- if punctuality does not improve further, the parent/carer will be asked to attend a meeting with the Head of School for Inclusion
- if the situation does not improve with the support from the school, an Early Help referral may be made to the Local Authority.

### **4.5 Following up absence**

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason for the absence, by text once the register has closed
- if the parent/carer does not get in touch with school following the text, the office staff will phone the parent/ carer and/or send a follow up email
- if no contact has been made by the parent/carer, the Head of School for Inclusion will be notified and will advise of next steps
- contact other named contacts on the child's record
- ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- identify whether the absence is authorised or not
- identify the correct attendance code to use

### **4.6 Reporting to parents**

Parents/carers are notified regularly of their child's attendance. Pupil attendance and punctuality are included individually in the child's Autumn School Report at the end of Term 1, in the Spring School Parents' Meetings at the end of Term 4 and with the final school report at the end of the academic year. Our school target for pupil attendance is 96%. Parents can log onto the Parent Portal of Arbor at any time to see their child's attendance record.

## **5. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

### **5.1 Approval for term-time absence**

The Executive 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 only at the Executive Headteacher's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, the pupil's overall attendance pattern, any previous pattern of term time leave, family circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Documentary evidence will be requested to validate any request.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail) or if an absence is recommended by a health professional
- religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. One day per academic year is authorised. 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, Bargees (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
- a wedding of a close family member
- a serious illness/ death/funeral of a close family member
- if a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad, where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the future that coincides with school holidays
- any other circumstances that the Executive Headteacher deems as exceptional

If a holiday or leave of absence is taken without the agreement of the Executive Headteacher or is in excess of what has been agreed, then the absence will be marked as unauthorised and parents/carers may be issued a fixed-penalty notice by the Local Authority.

The granting of a leave of absence does not set precedent for future absences.

## **5.2 Reducing persistent absence**

The office staff monitors class attendance each day to ensure accurate attendance/absence codes are used. Where an absence is unexplained, it will be followed up promptly with the parent/carer and referred to the Head of School for Inclusion if satisfactory explanation is not provided.

Individual pupil attendance is monitored regularly.

When a pupil's attendance is close to 90%, or falls below 90%, or if there is a regular pattern of absences, the office staff will discuss the case with the Head of School for Inclusion/the Executive Headteacher and the parent/carers will be notified of this in writing. Where an absence is explained due to ill health and medical evidence is provided, future attendance is monitored throughout the term. However, if there is no improvement, the office staff will arrange a call/meeting with the parents/carer to set an action plan and offer any support or assistance. A referral to the School Nurse or Early Help team may be made, who will work with parents/carers to improve a child's attendance.

The Head of School for Inclusion may also meet with the parent/carers if pupil's attendance is not increasing following the support from the office staff.

If there is no improvement, a referral to the Early Help team/Local Authority will be made.

## **5.3 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 the Executive Headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a fixed-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**

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Parents/carers are regularly informed and thanked for their support where a pupil's attendance or punctuality improves.

*Excellent class attendance and punctuality is celebrated weekly and class certificates are handed out in Collective Worship to the winning classes. Individual pupils receive end of term and end of year certificates for 100% punctuality and attendance.*

### **7. ATTENDANCE MONITORING**

The office staff at St Matthew's Primary School monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call/email or text the school by 9am in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

We ask that parents/carers contact the school each day of their child's illness with an update, unless it is expected that the child will be absent from school for a certain period of time, such as for chicken pox.

The school always keeps in touch with parents/ carers when a child is absent and monitors the length of attendance accordingly. If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving external support, such as a referral to Early Help.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. The office staff has termly meetings with the Early Help team and will discuss cases of persistent absentees to find ways to improve pupil attendance.

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 Governing Body.

The school collects and stores attendance data on the school's Management Information System (Arbor). This is to:

- track individual pupil attendance
- identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.



## **8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the Governing Body.

## **9. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

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### Appendix I: 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	Pupil arrives late <u>before</u> register has closed (9:30am)
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at an off-site supervised educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a perspective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in as 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 at a work experience placement
<b>AUTHORISED ABSENCE</b>		
C	Authorised 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	Family holiday (agreed)	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

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<b>UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE</b>		
G	Family holiday (not agreed)	Pupil is on holiday that was not approved by the school
N	No reason	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Late	Pupil arrives late <u>after</u> register closes (9:30am)
<b>OTHER</b>		
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 school roll	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole school closure due to half term, bank holiday, INSET day