

ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY



THE MISSION OF OUR SCHOOL IS:

*Christ is the centre of our school community
where we live, love and learn together.*

This policy reflects the mission and aims of St Thomas More School by:-

- Encouraging staff, parents and children to make full use of all learning time and learning opportunities in order that all children reach their God given potential.
- Promoting, as part of its work in Citizenship and PSHE, the importance of compliance with legal responsibilities and social expectations.
- Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.

PRINCIPLES

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by the parent.

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

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as genuine illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- ❖ parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- ❖ truancy before or during the school day
- ❖ absences which have never been properly explained

- ❖ **children who arrive at school too late to get a mark**
- ❖ **holidays in term-time.**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage if there are any problems with regular attendance. These are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. It is never better to 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 may make things worse.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Social Worker from the Education Welfare Service of the Local Authority. The ESW will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

PROCEDURES

What the school expects from Parents, Carers, Children

- The school day begins at 8.45am and children are expected to be in school at that time.
- Registers are marked between 8.45am and 8.50am.
- Children who arrive after 8.45am are marked as 'late'; children who arrive after 9.30am are marked as 'late' but the session is recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Children who are late must be signed in the 'Late Register' which is in the School Office.
- Parents/Carers are expected to notify the school if a child is not going to attend on that day.
- Written explanations for absence are required where there has been no telephone contact.
- Parents and Carers should be aware that a written explanation does not authorise an absence. Only the Headteacher can authorise absence.

HOW THE SCHOOL RESPONDS TO ABSENCE

- 'First day' telephone calls are made in cases where no notification is received. When mobile telephones are unanswered a voicemail message is left requesting a return call.
- Absences and 'lates'; are recorded in electronic systems which also record reasons for absence, using codes.
- Concerns about unauthorised absence, high levels of authorised absence, or trends and patterns of absence are discussed regularly at Senior Leadership Team meetings.
- Parents/Carers of identified children are sent a letter by the Headteacher, either requesting a meeting with school staff or advising of the proposed intervention of the ESW.
- Pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality falls into the above category are given individual targets/strategies as part of the generic Pupil Support Plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL USES DATA

- Electronic systems are used for registration and for generation of reports and data.
- Fortnightly attendance and punctuality data is accessed and analysed by group, individual and trend, by the Deputy Headteacher.
- Concerns trigger interventions from within the school or the ESW.
- Where appropriate, data triggers statutory action.
- Individual pupil attendance and punctuality data is presented to parents and carers at the end of each term for children whose attendance is being monitored.
- Individual pupil attendance print outs are attached to the annual report for parents and form a part of the reporting process.
- Individual pupil attendance print outs are provided to parents as part of the procedures for requesting leave in term time.
- Reasons for absence are monitored and analysed.
- Aggregated data is presented to parents in newsletters and governors in reports.
- Reasons for absence and/or registration codes are monitored and analysed.
- Responses to these are via whole-school strategies or individual interventions, as appropriate.

HOW THE SCHOOL WORKS WITH THE EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL WORKER

- The Deputy Headteacher meets fortnightly with the ESW and communicates when necessary where there is an identified need.
- An Individual School Attendance Plan is agreed and forms the basis for working practice.
- An agreed written referral process is in place.
- All staff, parents, carers and pupils are aware of the scope of the role and services of the ESW.
- Efficient use is made of the time available.

HOW THE SCHOOL PROTECTS VULNERABLE CHILDREN

- Children whose attendance or punctuality is a cause for concern are supported by the inclusion of appropriate targets and strategies on their Pupil Support Plan.
- This is a generic support plan which encompasses support for special needs, learning, behaviour and social concerns. It replaces, as a single cohesive plan, the plans known as IEPs, IBPs, IAPs, PSPs etc.
- This approach acknowledges the interface between the work done by a variety of agencies and addresses the support of the child at a holistic level via the Every Child Matters Agenda.
- The attendance and punctuality of specific groups – Looked After Children; Children on the Child Protection Register; Travelling Children; previously excluded children – is separately and rigorously monitored by the Deputy Headteacher, the Designated Teacher for Child Protection (CP) and Looked After Children (LAC) and the Headteacher. Where there are concerns, the appropriate agency is notified immediately.

- Where there is an absence, explained or unexplained, of a child who is on the CP Register or who is a LAC, the relevant agency is informed as a matter of urgency.

HOW THE SCHOOL SUPPORTS GOOD ATTENDANCE

- The School has a positive and caring ethos which supports parents as the first educators of their children, and which shares and celebrates individual and group achievements. This is also consistent with the Every Child Matters agenda.
- As such, it has a Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy which underpin that ethos.
- Staff and governors actively promote good attendance via on-going practice and procedures and by use of whole-school strategies.
- Challenging targets are set to improve attendance.
- The school's pastoral and support systems are designed to take a child-centred, multi-agency approach to attendance and punctuality and to all aspects of school life which could impinge upon good attendance.
- These systems are extended and developed by the school's active involvement in the extended provision agenda and the Common Assessment Framework process.
- Communications from the Headteacher remind parents of their individual obligations and the specific issues relating to their child/ren.
- Promotional materials, obtained via the ESW and other sources, highlight the importance of attendance and its links with learning.
- Achievements in attendance are celebrated in assemblies, on school reports and in monthly communications with parents.
- Parents and carers are included in strategies for celebration as well as in interventions for non-compliance.
- Issues relating to attendance and punctuality are pursued as part of the school's curriculum work in Citizenship and PSHE.

SUMMARY

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

July 2009