

# St Thomas More Catholic High School



## Attendance & Punctuality Policy

### September 2024

(In line with statutory DfE guidance – August 24)

All members of our community are given equal opportunities in line with the Single Equality Duty.

Previous policy adopted by Local Governing Committee – September 2023

## **St Thomas More Catholic High School Mission Statement**

St. Thomas More Catholic High School is a Catholic school, and as such we strive to follow the example of Jesus Christ in our work, worship and relationships.

### **Our aims are:**

- To be a community based on Christian values, notably Love, Justice, Peace, Truth and Tolerance, and to encourage individuals in their commitment to these ideals.
- To provide a secure, welcoming and ordered environment in which individuals learn to value and respect both themselves and others.
- To give individuals the opportunities to develop their full potential as human beings, and to encourage and challenge them to do so.
- To encourage everyone to strive to do their best and to strive for the highest standards in all areas of activity. To help children grow into confident, open, resourceful young people with a sense of responsibility and of service.

# Attendance at St Thomas More Catholic High School

## Introduction

Attendance is the essential foundation for positive outcomes for all students, including their safeguarding and welfare, and should therefore be seen as **everyone's responsibility in school**. The link between attainment, behaviour and attendance is very clear, and it is the responsibility of both Parents/Carers and the school to ensure that our students attend every day in order to maximise their learning opportunities. We follow government targets and guidance and ask that all students and parents/carers aim for a minimum of 96% attendance.

The Education Act states that:

'Parents have the responsibility to ensure that their children receive a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.

## Aims

- To develop and maintain a whole-school culture that promotes the benefits of high levels of attendance and punctuality, ensuring that St Thomas More is a place where students feel they belong, are safe and are valued.
- To build strong relationships and collaborate with families, listening to and understanding the barriers to attendance, and working together to remove them.
- To ensure the school attendance policy clearly communicates to all relevant stakeholders (students, parents/carers, staff, governors) the school's high expectations, as well as everyone's roles and responsibilities in maintaining a culture of strong attendance and punctuality, along with strategies for driving improvement.
- To have effective and consistent day to day processes in place to follow-up absence and tackle poor attendance and/ or punctuality.
- To regularly monitor and analyse attendance, punctuality and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require support and put effective strategies in place.
- To share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the Trust, North Tyneside and other external agencies where a student's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- To be particularly mindful of students absent from school due to mental or physical ill health, or special educational needs and/or disabilities, and to provide them with additional support.

## **Why is good attendance important?**

Good attendance helps students to make progress academically and socially, and feel part of our school community. Building positive relationships in school supports students in having good mental health and wellbeing. Attendance at school is important to build confidence and self-esteem, to develop awareness of other cultures, religions and ethnicities. Students develop life skills to support them in having the best possible start in life.

## Expected standard of attendance

The school day begins at 8.45am each day and the school day finishes at 3.05pm (with the exception for students studying specific GCSEs where a Period 6 lesson is timetabled, the day finishes at 4.05pm).

Whilst all students should aim to be in school 100% of the time, the school expects all students to maintain a minimum level of 96% attendance. A student who is absent for more than 8 days during an academic year will fall below the expected minimum standard.

The table below shows how a student's percentage attendance relates to the number of days and lessons missed. As you can see, 94% attendance may initially appear to be good however this translates to a student missing 55 hours of lessons over the course of a school year which will have a negative impact upon their progress.

<b>Attendance % during one academic year</b>	<b>Equivalent number of days absent</b>	<b>Equivalent number of lessons missed</b>
98%	4 days	20 lessons
96%	8 days	40 lessons
94%	11 days	55 lessons
92%	15 days	75 lessons
90%	19 days	95 lessons
85%	28 days	140 lessons
80%	38 days	190 lessons
75%	48 days	240 lessons
70%	57 days	285 lessons

## **Legislation and Guidance**

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 makes clear, if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, his parent is guilty of an offence. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure parents fulfil their legal responsibility. The Local Authority has the authority to issue penalty notices and seek prosecution through the Magistrates' Court where parents fail to fulfil this obligation.

Government guidance defines a parent as

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e., lives with and looks after the child. The local authority and school will need to decide who comes within the definition of parent in respect of a particular student when using the legal measures, but generally parents include all those with day-to-day responsibility for a child.

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance '*Working together to improve school attendance*' (August 2024)

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

### **The Local Governing Committee**

The governing 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 monitoring, reviewing and challenging attendance data.
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

### **The headteacher**

The headteacher, Mr Watson, 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 students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **The designated senior leaders responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leaders are responsible for:

- Leading on and implementing the attendance policy and strategy across the school
- Communicating a clear vision for improving attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Ensuring all available tools to track and monitor attendance data are used to their full potential to target specific cohorts where attendance falls below school expectations
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data analysis
- Liaising with Heads of Year (HOY) and other school staff e.g. Family Support Worker, Learning Mentors.. to help parents/carers overcome any barriers to their child attending school.
- Developing and overseeing the implementation of targeted interventions to address attendance issues, and monitor the effectiveness of these interventions.
- Developing and overseeing the implementation of attendance rewards for students with excellent and/or improving attendance, and monitor the impact of these rewards.

The designated senior leaders responsible for attendance are Mr Henderson, Miss Hagan and Mr Flynn

### **Student Liaison Officer**

The student liaison officer is responsible for:

- Recording all reasons provided for absence on student registers.
- Contacting parents/carers when a reason for student absence has not been received to establish the reason for non-attendance.
- Following the guidance on completion of attendance registers outlined in DfE guidelines and entering appropriate codes for all students. (Please see Appendix B for attendance codes.)
- Supporting the Family Support Worker to make phone calls to parents/ carers of students of concern
- Updating Class Charts with the names of students who arrive late.
- Updating Class Charts when a student signs out for appointments/illness.
- Reporting any student and family safeguarding concerns using the agreed school processes (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)

### **The attendance data manager**

The attendance data manager is responsible for:

- Producing weekly attendance data to share with Attendance Leads, HOYs, Asst HoYs and SENDCo. Data will include whole school, year groups, form classes, key groups (incl. Pupil Premium and SEND) and intervention groups

- Assisting attendance leads in the creation of summary reports.
- Scrutinising registers and identifying students whose education is being affected by poor school attendance, and to refer them to the Head of Year, Attendance Lead, or Family Support Worker.
- Supporting the attendance officer with updating registers to ensure appropriate codes for all students are submitted (e.g., N codes assigned a code) at the end of each week.
- Supporting Asst. HoY, HoY, FSW and Attendance Lead in the production and sending of attendance concern letters.
- Sending migration reports to the Local Authority every half term.
- Supporting Census administration.
- Reporting any student and family safeguarding concerns using the agreed school processes (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)

### **The Family Support Worker**

The Family Support Worker is responsible for:

- Liaising with parents/carers and visiting student homes to discuss attendance, punctuality and welfare issues – to establish reasons for non-attendance and set up and implement Attendance Support Plans to facilitate and support a return to school.
- Working with school, families and partner agencies to deliver individualised and targeted support to ensure all students receive a suitable, full-time education.
- Liaising with HoYs and school attendance leads to discuss key students, their barriers to attendance and identify additional agencies/ supports that would support improving attendance for families.
- Leading on/ contributing to Early Help Assessments where a poor level of attendance is the primary concern.
- Informing social workers and youth offending team workers (same day) of any absences of students they are supporting.
- Reporting serious safeguarding concerns through Front Door referrals (e.g. any student with 10 days continuous absence without communication from parent/ carer)
- Reporting any other student and family safeguarding concerns using the agreed school processes (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)

### **Leadership Team Link to Year Group**

The LT link is responsible for:

- Supporting HOY/AHOY with their attendance responsibilities.
- Leading an identified attendance focus group within the year group.

## **Head of Year**

The HOY is responsible for:

- Supporting the whole-school approach to attendance by working with the attendance leads and attendance team to identify and support attendance related concerns.
- Liaising with families and partner agencies to encourage good attendance and to set up and implement Attendance Support Plans where appropriate.
- Leading a team of Form Tutors and Asst HoY in the monitoring and implementation of strategies to improve student attendance – engaging in regular discussions about the focus groups allocated to them (standing item and first priority on fortnightly meeting agenda).
- Meeting with the Attendance Lead every 2 weeks to discuss attendance issues and implement staged response.
- Highlighting attendance issues/importance during every weekly assembly
- Liaising with HoD's over individual student attendance matters
- Working with an allocated focus group to improve their attendance. This will involve phone calls/classcharts announcements home and check ins with students.
- Leading on rewards for their year group
- Leading on action to support and address students with punctuality concerns

## **Assistant Head of Year**

The Asst. HOY is responsible for:

- Assisting the HoY with attendance matters
- Tracking student attendance lesson by lesson, identifying any 'internal' truancies and informing parents of any such incidents daily.
- Working with an allocated focus group to improve their attendance. This will involve phone calls/classcharts announcements home and check ins with students.
- Supporting HOY with rewards initiatives.

## **Form Tutors**

Each and every Form Tutor and Asst. Form Tutor is responsible for:

- Creating a positive atmosphere in form time and PSHE, encouraging students to maintain good attendance and achieve their best.
- Ensuring all students feel a sense of belong and are valued.
- Entering accurate information on student attendance and punctuality into Class Charts during form time.
- Keeping their tutor notice board up to date with attendance notices and information.
- Dedicating one registration per week to focus on the form class's attendance.



- Working with the attendance team and HOY to support strategies for improving attendance within their form class, including focus group intervention.
- Working with the HoY & Asst HoY in the implementation of rewards.
- Liaising with HoY and Asst HoY regarding any student whose attendance is a cause for concern

### **Subject Teachers and Heads of Department**

Each and every subject teacher/ HOD is responsible for:

- Creating a positive atmosphere in their lessons, encouraging students to maintain good attendance and achieve their best.
- Ensuring all students feel a sense of belong and are valued.
- Entering accurate information on student attendance and punctuality into ClassCharts at the start of each lesson (and update it if a student arrives after the register is saved).
- Liaising with each other over regarding any students whose attendance in that particular subject is a cause for concern.
- Ensuring students who return after an absence are able to complete tasks and time is taken to support them with catching up on work missed.

### **Learning Mentors**

Each Learning Mentor is responsible for:

- Supporting students they work with, whose attendance is lower than 96%, to identify and overcome any barriers in/ outside of school.
- Discussing attendance during each session and having regular contact with parents/ carers regarding strategies to improve
- Lead on/ support EHA with an attendance focus

### **Learning Support Assistants and Associate SENCOs.**

Each LSA and Asst. SENDCO is responsible for:

- Promoting and supporting excellent school attendance with students they link with.
- Utilising a range of strategies and lead on improving attendance of students with SEND, where attendance is identified as a concern.
- Phone calls home/ meetings with parents/ carers to tackle barriers to attending.

### **Students**

We expect that all students will:

- Attend school regularly (96%+)

- Arrive on time throughout the day, attend all lessons punctually and be in Form or Assembly for 8.45am (at the latest) each morning.
- Make every effort to engage with all support offered
- Tell a member of school staff about any problem which is having a negative impact upon their attendance or punctuality.

## **Parents/ Carers**

We expect that all parents/ carers will:

- Encourage their child to attend school every day and on time.
- Ensure that their child arrives fully prepared for school, including wearing appropriate uniform.
- Contact school to report their child's absence before 8.45am on the day of absence, and each subsequent day of absence providing a reason for the absence.
- Provide school with at least two named contacts with up to date mobile, home, work and emergency contact numbers.
- Inform the school about any problems which may affect their child's attendance, punctuality or behaviour.
- Ensure that, where possible, all appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Attend meetings with staff in school if requested.

See Appendix C for Attendance Tips for Parents & Carers

## **Attendance register**

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

Registers are taken and recorded during morning form tutor registration/ assembly and sent to the Student Liaison Officer by 9.00am. Registers are taken during every lesson throughout the school day and sent to the Student Liaison Officer no later than 15 minutes into the lesson. Registers will mark whether the student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved-off-site education/activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Amendments to registers will include:

- The original entry

- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name of the person who made the amendment

(See Appendix B for the DfE attendance codes)

Every entry in the attendance register will be kept for 3 years to the date on which the entry was made.

## **Authorised and Unauthorised Absences**

Student absences are recorded within one of the following categories:

**Authorised absence** - An absence that is deemed valid, for example illness, urgent medical appointments, religious celebrations and exceptional circumstances which are beyond the control of the parent.

**Unauthorised absence** - Absences cannot be recorded as authorised where a reason for absence has not been provided by the parent, a family holiday that has not been agreed by the Headteacher, arriving at school after the registers have closed or where the school is not satisfied with the explanation.

**Approved Educational Activity** - supervised educational activity such as work experience, educational trips, sporting activity or other educational activity approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

### **Guidance on decisions to authorise absences:**

The decision to authorise an absence can only be taken by the Headteacher, or the person designated by the Headteacher to take this decision (The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 as amended). The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteachers discretion, including the length of time the student is authorized to be absent.

If the school decides that the reason given is not valid and your child does not attend school, the absence will be unauthorised. Where attendance is causing a concern, the school will challenge patterns of absence and the matter may be referred to the Local Authority Attendance and Placement Team and legal action by the Local Authority may be considered.

It is important to note that it is for parents to satisfy the school as to the validity of absence, and an email, written note or telephone call in respect of a child's absence does

not of itself oblige the school to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for the absence. In the case of absence due to medical reasons it is for parents to satisfy the school as to the validity of absence and to provide medical evidence to support the absence if requested. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

## **Absence Procedures**

### **Unplanned absence procedures:**

If your child is unexpectedly absent from school for reasons such as illness or urgent medical appointments parents/carers must report the absence using ClassCharts before 8.45am **each** morning their child is unable to attend. Parents/carers must provide a specific reason for absence, the school will then decide whether the absence is authorised. If parents are unable to access ClassCharts they can call the Attendance Line on 0191 2588354, leaving a message stating the student's name, form class, and reason for absence.

Absence due to illness will usually be 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 parents to provide evidence which confirms the student is unable to attend school, such evidence may include appointment cards, prescriptions, or other appropriate forms of evidence. We will not ask for evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Following up absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If a student has not registered at school and the school has not received communication from the parent/carer to explain the reason for the absence, the school will send a text message to the first contact recorded on the school system. It is essential that parents/carers contact school to determine the whereabouts of the child. If no communication is received, the school may try to contact the parent/carer/other named contacts by telephone or make a home visit.

If no reason for absence is provided by parents within 5 working days the N code will be replaced with code "O" (unauthorised absence). If in any situation the school is not satisfied about the explanation for absence it will remain unauthorised and we will ask the

parent for more information. If, after further investigation any doubt remains in respect of the explanation offered, then the absence will be marked as code “O” unauthorised.

Unexplained absences may be followed up by the relevant Head of Year and if necessary senior pastoral staff or the Family Support Worker.

### **Prolonged unexplained absences – Children Missing in Education**

If a student is absent from school for 2 weeks (10 days) or more and no contact has been established between home and school a referral will be made to the Attendance and Placement team following the guidance in the *Children Missing From Education Policy*. A safeguarding referral will also be made to North Tyneside Front Door (Social Services)

### **Planned absence procedures (Routine Medical & Dental Appointments):**

Where possible, all routine medical and dental appointments should be taken outside of school time. If your child has a medical appointment during the school day parents/carers need to inform the school before the absence can be authorised, this must be done by ClassCharts or telephone (0191 2588354). To assist us in ensuring medical or dental absences are authorised we request that parents/carers provide a copy of the appointment card or letter by attaching it to the ClassCharts absence report. Alternatively, if the parent/carer is unable to access ClassCharts, they must call the Attendance Line (0191 2588354) prior to the appointment and the student can bring the letter to school and present it at Reception for our records to be updated. Depending upon the time of the appointment, students should attend school before and after the appointment time to minimise time spent out of school.

### **Applications for leave of absence (including term time holiday)**

Parents/carers can demonstrate their commitment to their child’s education by not allowing their child to miss school for anything other than an exceptional and unavoidable reason. Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning that they have missed, which may ultimately have a detrimental effect on their future progress.

For example, a student who takes 10 days holiday during one academic year can only attain 94.7% attendance. A student who takes 10 days holiday in each academic year could lose the equivalent of 22 weeks (almost 6 months) during their formal school career.

All schools can grant a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances at their discretion. Schools are expected to consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant background context behind the request. If a

leave of absence is granted, it is up to the school to determine the length of the time for which the absence is authorised. The absence cannot be authorised retrospectively.

The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance and has therefore removed the discretion for headteachers to agree term time holiday requests. Due to the disruptive effect on a child's education, you are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term-time.

If a parent/carer wishes to take their child out of school during term time, they must apply in writing by completing a **Leave of Absence Application** form (available on the school website) and submitting it to the Head teacher prior to any proposed absence. The school appreciates receiving the form at least two weeks in advance of the requested date(s) of absence. The Headteacher will consider the request, and the parent will be notified of the Head Teacher's decision by letter.

The Headteacher must be satisfied that the exceptional circumstances justify an authorised absence. It is entirely the responsibility of the parent/ carer submitting the request to provide sufficient information and evidence to establish this fact. The request for an authorised leave of absence must be made in advance and the Headteacher may invite the parent/carer to the school to discuss the request before a decision is made.

If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the Headteacher, the expectation is that the student's attendance will be of a satisfactory level both prior to and after the date covered by the request. School staff may request that the child complete any work missed during the absence, and it is expected that the child will finish the work within a reasonable period. When a child is absent from school for an extended period (i.e. 15 school days or more) parents/carers should inform the school of the temporary address.

If the request for a leave of absence is refused, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If the parent/carer still takes their child out of school, the absence will remain unauthorised, and the Headteacher may refer the matter to the Local Authority to request that a Penalty Notice be issued against you. The Headteacher will take into consideration your child's overall school attendance when making this decision.

See Appendix D re Legal Sanctions and Appendix A for definition of parent.

## **Lateness and Punctuality**

The school places high expectations on students in relation to punctuality. Students must be in school for the start of the school day at 8.45am each morning. Students who arrive late to school after 8.45am must enter the school through the main reception where they will register their attendance.

Registers will be closed at 9.30am. A student who arrives late but before the register has closed, will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (Appendix B). A student who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent for the full session using the appropriate code. This absence will be recorded as unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that the reason given is an authorised absence.

Students who are frequently late can expect.

- Detentions
- Letters sent to parents/carers
- Parents/carers to be invited into school for a meeting to discuss the concerns

## **Monitoring attendance**

### **Reporting to parents/ carers**

The school will provide parents/carers details about student's attendance and absence levels via ClassCharts, student reports, attendance letters, attendance celebration awards and at parent information events (throughout the year including parents' evenings). Where there are causes for concern a member of the St Thomas More attendance team will liaise regularly with parents to support their child to achieve good attendance.

The school has stringent procedures in place for identifying students with attendance concerns. Such students may be identified by the:

- Attendance Lead
- Head and Assistant Head of Year
- Senior Leadership Team
- Family Support Worker
- Student Liaison Officer - Attendance
- Wider Pastoral Team

The attendance team will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data every 4 weeks, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level

- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority levels 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 Governing Committee.

### **Analysing attendance**

The school will:

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

### **Using data to improve attendance**

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to form tutors, Heads of Year and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with students 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

### **Persistent Absence**

In September 2015, the Department for Education determined that a student becomes a persistent absentee (PA) when they have an attendance record of 90% or below. Any student who has an attendance of 90% or below will be added to the school's persistent absentee register and will be monitored on a regular basis.

To improve the attendance of each persistent absentee the school will contact the parents/carers of students by letter, email or phone to discuss attendance concerns and highlight the importance of excellent attendance.

PA students and their parents/carers may be subject to an action plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. If a child becomes a PA student, we may seek parents/ carers consent to complete an Early Help Assessment (EHA) and we may consider convening a Team Around the Family (TAF).

### **Strategies to improve individual/group attendance**



The school continuously strives to maintain and improve attendance. Some of the strategies we use to promote are:

- ClassCharts app will be used to share attendance data with parents/carers and students, and incentivise good attendance.
- Identifying students with attendance concerns early, and contacting parents by letter.
- Weekly attendance data will be issued to tutors for each student on their register and daily conversations will be held within the registration period, with one day per week having a specific attendance focus – consistent across all year groups.
- Tutors, and other members of the attendance team, will be allocated a focus group of students based on data analysis and these students will be set individual targets to support improvement. This will then be reviewed and updated termly
- Termly postcards will be issued to students who have achieved excellent attendance/improved attendance for the full term.
- Attendance assemblies to highlight the importance of excellent attendance.
- Draws for vouchers/tokens/prizes for students with excellent attendance and improved attendance over a given period will take place throughout the school year.
- Other additional initiatives

### **Targeted Groups**

The school closely monitors specific groups of students, some of whom may need closer monitoring due to individual circumstances. Any concerns and trends to do with attendance will be picked up early and appropriate support given to these students. Such groups include.

- Students eligible for free school meals
- Looked after children
- Students eligible for Pupil Premium funding
- Students on Special Educational Needs and Disability register
- Students with medical conditions
- Year 7 students with attendance concerns from their primary schools
- Young carers
- Students who have English as an additional language
- Students who are deemed to be vulnerable for any other reason including those who have a social worker.

### **Additional Support**

There may be a range of reasons why a student may have attendance concerns. The school will offer relevant support to get to the bottom of any issues that affect attendance. Examples of support we can give may come from of some the following.

- Referral to Family Support Worker
- Referral to School counsellor
- Referral to pastoral mentors
- Referrals to outside agencies
- Home visits
- Referral to Young Carers support group
- Referral to academic mentor/Intervention groups
- SEND support

### **Children with health needs that cannot attend school**

If a child is absent from school for a long term medical condition\* the school requires the parents/carers to provide a medical letter from a medical consultant (not a GP) to authorise the absences and to access further supports. The school will work with parents/carers and the School Support Team at the Local Authority, CAMHS, NHS and other relevant services to deliver education for children with additional health needs. This may, or may not, depending upon the child's needs and the medical evidence available, include a referral to an alternative education provider or a referral for home and hospital tuition. School will work with parents and other services to set up an individually tailored reintegration plan for the child if appropriate.

\*See Appendix A for definition of **long term medical condition**.

### **Local Authority Attendance and Placement Team**

**The school will endeavour to work with the student and parents/carers to improve attendance.** Where the school is unable to secure an improvement in attendance through informal means the matter will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance and Placement Team for a period of monitoring. If there is no improvement in attendance Local Authority enforcement powers may be used. It should always be remembered that ultimately the Local Authority can issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecute parents in a Magistrates Court for failing in their duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly if the student's absences are marked unauthorised.

### **The Education Act states that:**

**'If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence'.**

## Appendix A - Definitions

Definition of **Parent** under Education Law (section 576 of the Education Act 1996) a parent is defined as all natural parents, whether married or not and includes any person who, although not a natural parent, has a responsibility for the care of the child. This means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in Education Law.

**Absence** is defined as 'not attending school for any reason'.

An **authorised absence** is defined as: an occasion when a student has not attended school and the school has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

An **unauthorised absence** is defined as an occasion when a student has not attended school and the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence or no reasons have been given.

A **long term medical condition** is defined as a condition that has a detrimental affect on the child's attendance. This could be either multiple periods of absence over a long period of time or a single period of 15 days or more. A long term medical condition can be a mental or physical health condition.

## Appendix B - Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from DfE's guidance on Working together to improve school attendance

### Present in school

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

## Authorised and Unauthorised absence from school

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	The pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>C1</b>	Leave of absence	The pupil should be participating in a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad
<b>C2</b>	Leave of absence – Part-time timetable	For compulsory school-age pupils who are on an agreed part-time timetable
<b>E</b>	Suspended or permanently excluded	The pupil has been suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>I</b>	Illness	The school has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>J1</b>	Leave of absence	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/ admission to another educational institution
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	The 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>	Parents travelling for occupational purposes	The pupil is a mobile child due to the parent travelling from place to place for business/trade
<b>Q</b>	Unable to attend due to lack of access arrangements	The pupil is unable to attend due to a lack of travel arrangements made by the local authority

<b>Y1</b>	Unable to attend due to lack of transport	Where the school or local authority normally provides transport which is not available; and the school is beyond reasonable walking distance
<b>Y2</b>	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	The pupil is unable to attend school because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
<b>Y3</b>	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use
<b>Y4</b>	Unable to attend due to the whole school being unexpectedly closed	Where the whole school was planned to be open but remained closed unexpectedly
<b>Y5</b>	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	If the pupil is in police detention or on remand to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing
<b>Y6</b>	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Pupil travel to or attendance at the school would be contrary to restrictions set by the secretary of state for health
<b>Y7</b>	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not the parent
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	The 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	The school is not satisfied with the reason for the pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	The pupil arrived late and after 30 minutes from the start of the session

## Additional attendance codes

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

## Appendix C – Attendance Tips for Parents and Carers

### Let your child know that attendance is important

- Talk to your child about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. (For example if their attendance is 94% they would miss 55 hours of lessons during the academic year.)
- Show them you are interested in their school activities, school work and homework.
- Know your child's attendance target, and check ClassCharts regularly to see how they are doing.
- Attend parents' evenings and school events.
- Praise and reward your child's achievements at school.
- Do your best to arrange routine medical and dental appointments after school hours.
- Encourage resilience and do not let your child take time off for minor ailments.
- Arrange family holidays outside of term time.
- Regularly check ClassCharts messages, text messages and letters sent from school.
- Take truancy seriously. If your child is not attending school as you expect they may be putting themselves at risk – Who are they with? What are they doing?

### Establish a routine

- Give yourself and your child enough time to get ready in the morning. Provide an alarm clock for your child rather than using a mobile phone alarm to ensure they arrive to school before 8.45am.
- Plan ahead the night before. Get uniform ready, encourage your child to pack their school bag and make sure all due homework is complete.
- Agree and insist upon an appropriate bedtime for your child in line with their age – and insist on a deadline for using a mobile phone / computer / TV.
- Don't allow children to keep their mobile phone in their bedroom overnight – it can be too tempting and can lead to poor sleep habits developing.

### **Keep open lines of communication with your child and school**

- Let the school know in advance if your child is going to be absent or if you have concerns about your child's attendance.
- Report all absences to school, each day, by 8.45am using ClassCharts.
- If your child doesn't want to go to school, find out why and work with school to address concerns. It is better to intervene early, rather than letting issues build up.
- If you notice your child is avoiding a particular lesson or is having a difficult time in one subject area, discuss this with your child's Head of Year. Offer extra support at home. This will help prevent your child developing a behaviour of avoidance in school when things become difficult.
- Make sure your child knows you do not approve of him/her being late. Talk to your child about issues that may be making them late for school.
- Do not let your child persuade you into making an excuse for him/her. If they are well enough to attend but refusing, please let school know.

Some students find it harder than others to attend school and therefore it is essential that schools and local authorities should work with students and parents/carers to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Improving attendance must be a concerted effort across all staff in school, the Local Authority, parents/carers and students.

**We are here to help you so do not hesitate to get in touch with the school if you have any specific concerns to do with attendance matters. Where the attendance of a student drops below a given level the school will contact parents/carers with the aim of improving the attendance of the child. Our Family Support Worker can offer advice and support to individual students and families when attendance problems arise. We are very grateful for your support in these matters.**



## **Appendix D – 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 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.

The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. These penalty notices are charged at £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days

## Appendix E - Attendance improvement procedure

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the following procedure will be followed to address attendance concerns.

