



**St Matthias Church of England Primary School**

**Headteacher Mrs Fiona Cullerne**

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## **Attendance Policy**

### **St Matthias CE Primary School**

**Approved and Adopted by Governors: Summer 2019**

**Review date: Summer 2022**

**Person Responsible: Mrs Fiona Cullerne/Mrs Ginnie Beale**

#### **1. Introduction**

St. Matthias CE Primary School recognises that good attendance is central to raising standards and pupil attainment. Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to realise their full potential. Children in England and Wales are required by law to attend school for just 190 days out of 365 each year. These days are organised into six periods or three terms, which leaves families with 13 weeks of designated holiday and an additional 5 days when school is closed for staff to undertake Training Days.

School education lays the vital foundations of a child's life. Punctuality and attendance are the most basic requirements placed on any individual in school or the workplace throughout their life and we expect parents and staff to support this position so that our children develop this mind-set early on in their lives. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. Parents, carers and school staff should work in partnership to make education a success and ensure that all children have full and equal access to all that the school has to offer. As a school we will encourage parents/carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. It is the responsibility of all parents to ensure that their child arrives at school on time, by 9am, every day and is collected on time to return home safely.

#### **2. Aims**

Our aim is to encourage every pupil to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance in order to take full advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

We will achieve this by;

- Supporting pupils and their parents/carers in our establishment in achieving the highest possible level of attendance and punctuality
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance
- Fostering a climate where regular attendance and punctuality are valued by the school community; staff, parents and children
- Providing a framework with agreed roles and responsibilities
- Developing positive and consistent communication between home and school, including set procedures for attendance information
- Providing support and guidance for parents and pupils
- Promoting and rewarding pupils' successes and achievements
- Providing a safe and secure environment for children so they wish to be in school
- Challenging and reducing levels of authorised and unauthorised absence
- Promoting effective partnerships with the Educational Welfare Service and other agencies

#### **3. Principles and guidelines**

The education Act 1996 states that all pupils should attend school regularly and punctually.

### Statutory Framework

Section 444 of the 1996 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 or her parent is guilty an offence.”

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if a request for absence letter is submitted to the Headteacher and he/she is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered, will the absence be authorised. See further on for more information.

Each child’s attendance can be summarised as:

<b>100%</b>	<b>Perfect</b> – Well done! This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school. This will give your child a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic for their future.
<b>96-99.9%</b>	<b>Good</b> – Well done - strive to build on this.
<b>90-95.9%</b>	<b>Concerning</b> – Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. The Education Welfare Officer [EWO] will monitor reasons for all absences with school administrator and Deputy Headteacher. You may be required to attend meetings and work with the school urgently to improve the situation.
<b>Below 90%</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b> – Absence <b>IS</b> causing <b>SERIOUS CONCERN</b> . It <b>IS</b> affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child’s learning. We will work with you and the Education Welfare Officer [EWO] to improve your child’s attendance. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can ‘authorise’ absence. The school will not necessarily assess all reasons as ‘valid’. See Appendix 1 for authorised and unauthorised codes.

The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly by the school and fortnightly by the EWO. We seek to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day
- Attend school punctually
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day (ie; PE kit, reading bags, etc)

We expect that parents/carers will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities of ensuring their child attends school
- Ensure their child attends every day unless they are genuinely ill
- Ensure their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day
- Ensure they contact the school on the first day of any absence by email or phone call and regular updates every Monday for a serious illness
- Notify school immediately of any changes to emergency contact details

The school will:

- Provide a welcome atmosphere
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality
- Monitor attendance and punctuality on an individual basis
- Log messages and phone calls with reasons for absence and minutes late on the school computer system (SIMs)

- Contact parents by text when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of rewards and recognition
- Regularly inform parents of the % attendance of all pupils. Half termly for every child and monthly for children whose attendance drops below 90%.
- Inform parents / carers via a series of letters/slips of their child's punctuality and attendance levels
- Work closely with the Education Welfare Officer on attendance data

#### **4. Promoting Good Attendance**

The school acknowledges that good attendance should be recognised and rewarded and uses a number of strategies to promote good attendance, including;

- Weekly Class Attendance – each week the class percentage is recorded on our chart and the class with the highest attendance is awarded the Attendance Cup and the Attendance Teddy.
- Termly Individual Attendance – at the end of each school term children with 100% attendance that term receives a special certificate.
- Pupils with 100% attendance over the year are awarded a gold certificate.
- School assemblies to discuss the importance of attendance with the children on subjects such as; attendance, time keeping, excuses, illness and telling the truth
- Each member of staff in school has a responsibility to promote attendance and welcome children back to school when they have been away
- A record of all concerns, correspondence and meetings will be kept on CPOMS (Safeguarding and Child Protection Software for schools)
- An attendance leaflet with important reminders will be sent to each family regularly
- The newsletters will inform parents of classes with the best attendance on a weekly basis
- Parents will be sent a monthly updates on the child's attendance percentage
- Parents will be informed of school holidays for the full year in advance so that holidays can be planned outside of term time

#### **5. Poor attendance**

Poor attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously as it can affect each child's:-

- attainment in school
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.

Prior to the engagement of the EWO, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupils' absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for EWO involvement.

#### **6. Arrival and Registration**

The school is opened at 8.45am. Children are encouraged to go straight into class on arrival and should be ready to start their learning from 9am promptly. The register is taken twice a day, at 8.55am and 12.55pm. A day counts as 2 attendance marks. Morning registration ends at 9.00am. If a child arrives after the registration period, he / she must report to the school office with a parent or carer and register using our electronic sign in system. This will record their arrival time and reason and reason for lateness. Arrival after 9.30am is recorded as an unauthorised late mark "U".

## 7. Non School Attendance in Term Time

Absence known to be for the following reasons would be authorised:

- Illness
- Religious observance
- Attendance at medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours
- Compassionate leave in some circumstances

## 8. Medical Appointments and Illness

From time to time children need to be absent from school for medical appointments or illness.

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. Medical appointments at a doctor or dentist surgery are often of a short duration and children should only be away from the school for a minimal amount of time. Even hospital and specialist appointments usually only take up part of a day. School should be informed of all such absences in advance and children should be brought in to school for morning registration and back to school straight after the appointment. An appointment card from the doctor or dentist or a letter from the hospital, or the prescription medication is required to be shown to the school office. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be out of school for the minimum amount of time required for the appointment and should be taken out of school just prior to the appointment and returned to school directly afterwards.

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 10am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. If your child is absent due to vomiting and / or diarrhoea they should not return to school for **the next 48 hours** after the last time that the child is ill. As a school we refer to [Health England](#) guidance to assist us in making decisions about an illness; otherwise a "common sense" approach is used and we expect parents and staff to make sensible judgments about whether a child suffering from a common illness is well enough to be in school, This is to reduce the risk of infection passing to other children and adults at the school. If the illness continues for more than a week, we ask that parents keep us updated every Monday.

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer by 10am by text if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence. This is to check on the safety of the child. If there is no response to the text messages, office staff or the deputy head will try to contact the parents by phone.

## 9. Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "permission for leave" has been given. These may include;

- Parents / carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Birthdays, Shopping, or looking after other children
- Holidays

The Department of Education has, from the 1st September 2013, announced that parents have no legal entitlement to take their child out of school for a **holiday during term time**.

Any application for leave must only be in exceptional circumstances by completing an application for leave of absence form, which can be obtained from the school office. The application must be made in advance and the Head Teacher will decide if the application warrants exceptional circumstance. If so the absence will be authorised, if NOT it will be unauthorised. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a

pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher’s discretion. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

**If it is unauthorised, parents may be fined by means of Penalty Notices or Prosecutions in the Magistrates Courts by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.**

If records show families repeatedly taking unauthorised leave during term time, or if a child has a poor attendance record (Below 96%) for any reason and the school feels that this is impacting on their learning, they may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer. The EWO can make a referral to the local authority. The local authority will then look at the referral and issue a fine or consider prosecution of parents based on low attendance, unauthorised or unexplained absence.

**10. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across any term of the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to the child’s education and we need parent’s fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

National figures show that it is **highly unusual** for any child to be absent for more than 10% of the year through illness. Therefore, we will treat this as such and monitor all absences and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and we will seek to take action immediately. Once a child’s absence levels dips below 96% the school will require medical evidence in the form of a doctor’s appointment card or prescription or prescribed medicine, or hospital letter, as proof of genuine illness. Without evidence of this nature, any absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

We may make referrals to the School Nurse and Education Welfare officer if we are concerned about regular bouts of illness. Parents should keep the school informed of any known on-going medical conditions so that school attendance can be supported.

**11. Role of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)**

The EWO has meetings in school every fortnight to monitor our attendance. They request a list of pupils whose attendance has dropped below 96% and discusses the reasons with office staff and the deputy head. If the reasons are not substantial they will contact the family via; letter, phone call, arrange a meeting in school or go on home visits.

They also monitor the Persistent Absence list and repeated lateness in school visits. They ask what steps we have taken to reduce absences, and if these steps have not produced good results they will contact the family again via; letter, phone call, arrange a meeting in school or go on home visits improve attendance or lates. If these interventions are not successful they will make a referral to the local authority on the schools behalf.

**12. Roles and Responsibilities**

Role	Responsibility
Headteacher Deputy Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational management of the policy</li> <li>• Consider requests for authorised absence. Give approval in advance in appropriate circumstances</li> <li>• Authorise absence after it occurs when a satisfactory explanation is accepted</li> <li>• Ensure that anti-bullying and behaviour policies are followed and ensure action is taken in response to any difficulties reported and [e.g. bullying/behaviour] which impact on attendance</li> <li>• Consider the use of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence or lateness</li> <li>• Complete HT witness statements on pupil absence for court use</li> </ul>

Attendance Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print weekly registers in case of IT breakdown</li> <li>• Send a text to parents when first day of absence if contact has not been made by parents</li> <li>• Accurately record attendance data daily using agreed codes</li> <li>• Record late arrival, log time of arrival and record reasons if given on SIMS</li> <li>• Ensure reasons for absences are accurately recorded on SIMS</li> <li>• Prepare standard letters requesting reasons for absence when this is unexplained</li> <li>• Prepare letters to inform parents when a child's attendance is giving cause for concern and is thus being monitored</li> <li>• Collect absence notes and record reasons for absence</li> <li>• Meet with the Deputy Headteacher reporting monthly attendance monitoring and take agreed action</li> <li>• Provide attendance reports when requested and ensure DfE attendance returns are accurate</li> </ul>
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure their child attends daily, on time and fully prepared for school</li> <li>• Keep the school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school</li> <li>• Telephone school on the first day of any absence to inform school of the reason</li> <li>• Provide a note confirming the reason for absence on the child's return to school</li> <li>• If attendance becomes a problem – work with the school to improve matters</li> <li>• Give serious consideration to whether it is appropriate or necessary to request term time absence</li> <li>• Make application for any term time leave of absence prior to proposed dates</li> <li>• Provide medical evidence of illness when required by the school (ie if child's attendance drops below 90%)</li> </ul>
Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make every effort to attend school during term time and to arrive in time for registration</li> <li>• Arrive fully prepared for work with PE kits, reading bags etc</li> </ul>
Education Welfare Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work closely with school and families to resolve attendance issues</li> <li>• Visit school for meetings at agreed times</li> <li>• Identify, with school, cases of unauthorised absence which necessitate action and advise on responses</li> <li>• Provide written reports to school in the form of consultation sheets</li> <li>• Analyse trends in attendance data to identify appropriate action</li> <li>• Investigate reasons for absence exploring any underlying cause either at home or in school</li> <li>• Complete regular register checks</li> <li>• On receipt of a written referral, take appropriate action, which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ advice on strategies to improve attendance</li> <li>✓ assessment home visits</li> <li>✓ action planning</li> <li>✓ agreed time-limited intervention</li> <li>✓ attendance at school meetings</li> <li>✓ written record of work undertaken</li> <li>✓ verbal feedback where appropriate</li> <li>✓ written response to referral within 10 days</li> <li>✓ liaise with other agencies</li> <li>✓ onward referral to other agencies</li> <li>✓ liaison with other Local Authority departments</li> <li>✓ preparation of cases for prosecution including sending warning letters</li> <li>✓ preparing Witness Statements for Magistrates Court</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Class Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and deliver stimulating and enjoyable learning for all children</li> <li>• Registration of pupils at the start of morning and afternoon sessions by five past 9am and five past 1pm.</li> <li>• Alert the attendance secretary of any children who demonstrate an unsettled pattern of attendance or whose attendance pattern changes.</li> <li>• Save registers on class PC immediately after registration</li> <li>• Report percentage attendance at parent consultations; encourage regular punctual attendance; work to secure regular punctual attendance</li> <li>• Ensure all absence notes are passed to the attendance secretary.</li> <li>• Work with the SLT to agree and implement strategies to re-engage pupils with emerging attendance problems.</li> </ul>
Governing Body	<p><b><i>It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The Governing Body holds responsibility for Attendance Policy and for seeing that it is carried out. The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that the school's attendance figures remain high. The Attendance Policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every three years, or earlier if considered necessary.</i></b></p>

## Appendix 1 **Authorised Absence from School**

'Authorised Absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence. Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:-

**Code B:** Educated off site

**Code C:** Leave of absence authorised by the school - Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

**Code D:** Dual Registration

**Code E:** Excluded but no alternative provision made. - If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

**Code H:** Holiday authorised by the school

Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

**Code I:** Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

**Code L:** Late before registers closed

**Code M:** Medical or dental appointments - Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of 11 school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

**Code P:** Approved sporting activity

**Code R:** Religious observance - Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

**Code T:** Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence. - A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups. To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

**Code V:** Educational visit or trip.

**Code X:** For non-compulsory school age children not expected in school.

## **Unauthorised Absence from School**

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:-

**Code G:** Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

**Code N:** Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

**Code O:** Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

**Code U:** Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

## Appendix 2



## St Matthias Church of England Primary School

Headteacher Mrs Fiona Cullerne

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### REQUEST FOR ABSENCE OR HOLIDAY FORM

This is an application for a leave of absence during term time from St Matthias Church of England Primary School.

#### **Legal Background**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Only in exceptional circumstances may an amount of leave be granted in any academic year.

#### **The School's Policy**

The school considers that all absences from school will disrupt the child's learning and classroom friendships. Therefore absences should only be due to genuine illness.

Since September 2013, the Department for Education have stated that parents are no longer entitled to take their children on holiday in school time, except in exceptional circumstances.

Where parents take a child on holiday without permission, or fail to apply for permission in advance, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Since September 2013 schools are unable to authorise any term time holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

Parents will be informed, in writing, of the outcome of their application for a leave of absence.

#### **Applying for Leave of Absence During Term Time**

Applications should be made using the other side of this form two - four weeks in advance of the proposed dates whenever possible. (Parents are advised to apply for leave of absence before they confirm any holiday arrangements.)



# HOLIDAY/ABSENCE FORM

<b>To The Headteacher &amp; Chair of Governors</b>		<b>Year</b>
<b>Child's Name</b>		

**Dates for which leave of absence is requested**

From:	To:	Number of School Days .....
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Where is the child going exactly?

Has your child previously been granted a holiday during this school year? **YES / NO**

If **YES** please give dates of that holiday..... Number of School Days .....

Please give the reasons which prevent this holiday being taken during the school holiday.

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.....

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(If you wish you may attach a separate letter to support your request.)

Signed ..... (parent/guardian)                      Date .....

**FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY**

Child/ren will be sitting SAT's during this school year. **YES / NO**

Level of attendance during last academic year .....%, and    during current year..... %.

Level of attendance during last academic year .....%, and    during current year..... %.

Other relevant information .....

Leave of absence **approved** / **NOT** approved                      (delete as appropriate)

Signed ..... Chair of Governors / Headteacher                      Date .....