



St Matthias School

Attendance Policy

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| Date adopted | 7 December 2017 | Notes School Policy |
| Last Reviewed | 7 December 2017 | |
| Review Cycle | Every Three Years | |
| Author/Owner | Governing Body | |

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1. Introduction and Statutory framework

St Matthias Primary School aims to maximise attendance rates and secure high levels of punctuality in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them. If allowed to remain unchecked persistent absence and lateness can significantly impact on a pupil's progress and achievement. Our partnerships with parents play a vital role in ensuring that this is achieved.

In line with the 1996 Education Act, we expect all children on roll to attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We will endeavour to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to create happy and rewarding environment for all children where the children want to come. We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

We recognise that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. At all times, parents are encouraged to take an active role in the school life and to share and support their children's learning. Through our home-school agreement, parents agree to ensuring their child's the regular and punctual attendance. As part of our annual written reports to parents, the children's attendance records are shared.

2. Monitoring and Reviewing Attendance

Attendance data is held electronically on our Management Information System, accessible by the head teacher and senior teachers, office staff and attendance officer, who are able to conduct spot check on individual children and provide comprehensive attendance records.

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance of absence of every pupil. The Online Attendance Registers are marked by the class teacher (or class based support staff in their absence) twice each day, at the start of the morning session at 9am and again in the afternoon at 1:30. These must be completed by 9:10 and 1:40 respectively, for safeguarding purposes. All absences and late arrivals should be recorded in the electronic register by the office and attendance staff using the following codes.

| REGISTER CODE | MEANING OF CODE | PRESENT/ABSENT (Authorised/Unauthorised) |
|---|--|--|
| # | School closed to pupils | Authorised Absence |
| / | Present (am) | Present |
| \ | Present (pm) | Present |
| B | Educated off site | Present |
| C | Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) | Authorised Absence |
| This should only be used if authorised by the headteacher | | |
| D | Dual Registered (at another educational establishment) | Authorised Absence |
| E | Excluded (no alternative provision made) | Authorised Absence |
| F | Extended family holiday (agreed) | Authorised Absence |
| G | Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement) | Unauthorised Absence |
| H | Family holiday (agreed) | Authorised Absence |
| I | Illness (NOT medical, dental, etc. appointment) | Authorised Absence |
| J | Interview | Present |
| L | Late (before registers closed) | |
| M | Medical, dental, etc. appointment | Authorised Absence |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence | Unauthorised Absence |
| O | Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description) | Unauthorised Absence |
| P | Approved sporting activity | Present |
| R | Religious observance | Authorised Absence |
| S | Study Leave | Authorised Absence |
| T | Traveller absence | Authorised Absence |
| U | Late (after registers closed) | Unauthorised Absence |
| V | Educational visit or trip | Present |
| W | Work experience | Present |
| X | Non-compulsory school age absence | Present |
| Y | Enforced/Partial closure | Present |
| Z | Pupil not yet on roll | Present |

No child should remain marked 'N' for more than 5 days. The teacher and office staff must persist in getting the parents to share the reason for the absence and the get the code changed as soon as possible.

Absence of Children

The school should be notified of all absences by parents/carers either by letter or telephone. All letters should be kept in the attendance file for the duration of that academic year and all phone calls logged in the absence book in the school office.

When the register closes at 9:10, the office staff check the messages. If a pupil is absent and the school has not been contacted, then the office staff will telephone parents to check on why a pupil is not in school. The office staff update the electronic register on Integris each day with reasons for absence. Where they have not yet ascertained the reason for the absence, the code N will be used as a temporary code.

The class teacher must inform the school office immediately if they know that a pupil will be absent and the reason for that absence.

When a pupil returns after an absence, the reason for the absence must be obtained (if it was not already reported by the child's parent/carer) and reported to the school office. The class teacher should try and ascertain the reason in the first instance, with follow up from the attendance officer if necessary.

If despite exhaustive attempts to get a reason from parents no reason for a child's absence is received the absence must be recorded as unauthorised. (Code O)

Holiday during term time will not be authorised.

If the teacher has any concerns about an absence or identifies a pattern of absences please bring it to the attention of the attendance officer.

In order to safeguard children, no child will be taken off roll until confirmation has been received from the admitting school or we have received a letter from the parent declaring the intention to educate at home. Where this has not happened, children will be referred to Tower Hamlets 'Missing in Education' team,

The attendance officer monitors the attendance of pupils each week. Where the attendance officer feels it appropriate, parents/carers will be notified by letter when their child's attendance drops below the school's target of 95%. If attendance drops below 90% a 2nd letter may be written informing parents/carers and the attendance officer may invite the parents to a meeting to discuss ways of improving attendance. The School will refer a pupil to the AWO if a child's attendance drops below 85% and there is no satisfactory reason for this drop in attendance. Returns of school data are made annually to the DfE and benchmark data exists to compare our school within local and national contexts.

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and Governors at the first full governing body meeting of the school year. Targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years.

3. Punctuality and Lateness

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start at the start of the school day. The attendance officer monitors lateness of pupils as punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is of extreme importance therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will make verbal contact with parents/carers. If the concerns persist, the attendance officer will write to the parents/carers. If there is no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer. In the event of persistent lateness, the school will make a formal referral to the AWO. If lateness continues to persist then parents may be issued with a fixed penalty notice.

4. Authorised and Unauthorised Attendance

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence not parents and it is a statutory requirement for the head teacher to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised. Wherever reasonably possible, we expect parents to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time. If this is not possible please give as much written notice as possible with a copy of the appointment slip.

If a child is absent from school for whatever reason the parent must inform the school in person, in writing or by telephone as soon as possible. The normal routine is to telephone the school on the first morning of absence. Such calls are always logged. Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school received no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given. Where a child's attendance has fallen below 85% and there is a pattern of lots of individual days off where the parent is claiming the child is sick, then, after meeting with the parent to try and improve the situation, the school may decide to decline to authorise any absence unless proof of genuine illness is given (for example a doctor's appointment or prescription medicine).

5. Leave of Absence

The Government have issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- Head teachers **Shall not grant any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional circumstances** relating to the application. Exceptional circumstances being defined as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time

- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the head teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave
- Head teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent
- applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, By Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period

if a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that notice, the matter will be referred to Tower Hamlets Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal Prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

St Matthias Primary School understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but this does NOT count as an exceptional circumstance. Leave which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning of end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a wedding
- Family birthdays

6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Why attendance matters:

Less than

- 5 days absence = 98%+attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 93.5% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 90% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 88% attendance

If a child achieves 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 40 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week

At St Matthias School the staff and Governors endeavour to support parent in the responsibility of attendance by:-

- An environment in which pupils feel welcomed and valued. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken
- Making every effort to match learning tasks to pupil's needs
- Collating attendance data termly and analysing it in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice
- Parents will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, parent's evenings etc.) of the importance of good attendance
- The Head teacher will report to governors on attendance at each full governing body meeting (5 times per year)
- The attendance officer may liaise with other agencies when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing difficulties
- Some secondary school make links with the school and Year 6 pupils to help with a smooth transfer to their school. Discussions will identify those pupils who may require extra support during this process.

7. Role of the Attendance Governor

The attendance governor will act alongside the Head teacher to monitor the attendance of all children and vulnerable groups (Pupil Premium, FSM, SEN, etc) and ensure that this policy is being followed.

8. Role of AWO

On those occasions when a pattern of poor attendance or lateness is developing the attendance officer will work directly with the family to seek solutions. Should the problem drop below 85% then a referral to the Attendance and Welfare office department (AWO) will follow. The function of AWO at this stage is the Compliance / Enforcement part of the service which delivers the Local Authorities statutory response where attendance has fallen below 85%.

9. Data Analysis

The school collect and stores attendance data using the RM Integriss management information system. The school provides attendance data to the DFE, using RM Integriss to send data about the school census. The figures returned are then published by the DFE as part of the annual publication of school statistics. The school uses the attendance data to identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and to track the attendance of individual pupils. Where attendance is a concern, the school will use data to analyse attendance by year group classes, groups of pupils for example ethnicity of gender. The school uses attendance data to identify the main causes of absences within the school and to take action to address and improve those areas. The school will use data to monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.