



St Matthew's Primary School

Attendance Policy

January 2022

ST MATTHEW'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY FOR ATTENDANCE

Rationale

Good attendance and punctuality are central to every child achieving the best from the education available at school.

School attendance is subject to a legal framework and it is parents/carers legal responsibility to send their child to school every term time day.

Families, the school and the Education Welfare Service all have a part to play in establishing and maintaining good levels of attendance for all pupils. Through working in partnership we can achieve the best for all children.

Purpose

This policy sets out clearly the role and responsibilities of families, the school and the Education Welfare Service as well as this school's systems for monitoring attendance and recognising excellent attendance and improving the attendance of children where necessary.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of families

Parents¹ are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs which they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at school at the required times and by sending their children to school routinely.

The parent/carer is primarily responsible for ensuring their child attends school every day. However, where school attendance problems occur, the key to resolving these problems is engaging the child through collaborative working between the parent, the school and the local authority.

Parents should:

- Ensure their children attend school every day
- Ensure they are punctual for school and are on time everyday
- Ensure they are appropriately dressed in school uniform and in a condition ready to learn, having had enough sleep and breakfast
- Comply with the Attendance Policy of our school
- Make sure their child understands the reasons for good attendance and punctuality
- Make sure appointments are made outside of school hours wherever possible and show evidence of the appointment when it is not
- Notify the school on the first day of absence when their child is absent
- Follow the procedure for term time leave
- Only allow absence from school for legitimate reasons eg illness
- Work in partnership with the school to maximise their children's attendance

¹ The term 'parent' includes those who have parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act 1989 and as defined in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996. The latter

gives 'parental responsibility' to those who may not be the child's actual parents but have day to day care of the child.

Responsibilities of schools

The school will:

- Have a registration system that is accurate, informative and understood
- Analyse data regularly and identify any actions that need to be taken
- Follow up unexplained absences promptly
- Ensure that attendance and punctuality have a high profile in communications with parents
- Have clear written guidance for parents
- Promote good attendance and punctuality for all
- Work in partnership with families and the Education Welfare Service
- Monitor the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy
- Inform parents of their child's attendance regularly during the school year

The school systems are maintained by an Attendance Officer. The Co-Headteachers are responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy.

Responsibilities of the Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will:

- Monitor registers regularly
- Identify pupils/families with attendance difficulties
- Agree time limited action which needs to be taken by the school or Education Welfare Officer
- Feedback on the progress of cases and exchange of information
- Issue Penalty Notices where applicable
- Provide advice to the school
- Work in partnership with the school and families

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Timing of the school day:

	Start	Register taken	Register closes	Session ends
Morning				
Foundation Stage	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	11.30
Key Stage 1				
Year 1	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	12.00
Year 2	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	12.30
Key Stage 2				
Year 3	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	11.45
Year 4	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	12.00
Year 5	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	12.15
Year 6	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	12.30
Afternoon				

Foundation Stage	12.30	12.35	12.40	3.20
Key Stage 1				
Year 1	1.00	1.05	1.10	3.20
Year 2	1.30	1.35	1.40	3.20
Key Stage 2				
Year 3	12.45	12.50	12.55	3.25
Year 4	1.00	1.05	1.10	3.25
Year 5	1.30	1.35	1.40	3.25
Year 6	1.15	1.20	1.25	3.25

Doors open at 8.45am, which enables a calm beginning to the day. We would prefer that all children are brought to and from school by an adult. Where children in Years 5 and 6 walk home at the end of the school day unaccompanied we require a signed letter from the parent stating they accept responsibility for their child's safety.

Registers are taken at the beginning of each session; therefore there are two marks for each day, one in the morning and one after lunch.
The school follows the Local Authority's registration regulations.

Guidelines for marking registers are shown in Appendix 1.

Punctuality

Registers are open for 10 minutes each morning.

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as 'Late' (L)- which counts as being present.

A pupil who arrives late after the register is closed will be marked as absent. If the pupil is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised. If the pupil is late for no good reason the absence will be marked with the unauthorised absence code 'Late after register close' (U)

If a pupil is late on 8 occasions over a 6 week rolling period then The Education Welfare Service will issue a fine to parents/carers of £60.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning time being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children who are late and disrupt the learning of others.

Minutes late per day	Equates to Days of Teaching Lost in one Year
5 min	3 days
10 min	6 days
15 min	9 days

Absence from school

Children must be present at both registrations to get full attendance for the day. Absence can be recorded as authorised or unauthorised:

What is Authorised Absence?

Absence for which a valid reason has been given e.g. illness, medical appointment (appointment card seen)

What is Unauthorised Absence?

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise the absence or not. This is not an exhaustive list but absences that will be unauthorised may include:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Day trips
- Tiredness
- No one available to bring child to school
- Sickness of parent
- Visiting ailing relatives overseas in term time

What to do if a child is absent for a legitimate reason

Parents should telephone the school by 9:30am on the first day of absence. There are a number of ways to notify us of your child's absence:

1. There is a dedicated absence line, phone 01582 723970, select Option 1 and leave a voice message
2. Go onto your Parentmail App, tap the option Absences on the drop down menu and add your child's details
3. Email admin.stmatthews@smps.uk

If no notification of absence is given the Attendance Officer will contact the family during the first day of absence.

If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

If a child is absent for 3 days or more school will request medical evidence in order to authorise the absence (this can be screenshot of a call log, prescription/medicine, or medical letter)

Where no contact can be made with the family

Where no contact can be made with the family or absence is prolonged the Attendance Officer will refer the case to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and the Co-Headteachers will consider removing the child from the school's roll.

The Educational Welfare Officer is able to issue Penalty Notices to those families where unauthorised absence exceeds 4 days (8 sessions).

This procedure is set shown in Appendix 3.

What to do if a child has a medical appointment in the school day

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.

It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

Any absence due to a medical appointment will be unauthorised if medical evidence is not presented.

Religious observance

The school will authorise 2 days per academic year for religious observance.

These 2 days need to be at separate occasions. School cannot authorise 2 consecutive days for religious observance.

The school will authorise one day of absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence.

Luton Borough's Education Welfare Service Advice on Absence for Religious Observance-Guidance for Schools, can be found at the end of this Policy.

Term time leave of Absence Requests

If parents/carers need to request a term time leave of absence they must complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least four weeks before the absence. Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing. Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request.

Please be aware that the Education Regulations by the Department for Education state schools can no longer authorise any term time leave. Therefore this leave is unauthorised and will result in a minimum £60 fine per child per adult, for unauthorised absence of 5 days or more.

If your child is absent for a period of 20 days or more which is unauthorised, we will decide whether to take your child off our school roll, freeing a place for another child to attend our school. You would then need to reapply for a school place with Luton Borough Council's Admissions Team at Luton Town Hall.

Bereavement

There is no set policy to say how much time off school bereaved children can take. However, we authorise 2 days of absences due to bereavement of **extended** family.

All cases of bereavement for an **immediate** family member will be dealt with on a case by case basis. We ask that we are informed as soon as possible if a child is going to be absent for such a reason and open communication is maintained throughout any prolonged absence so we can best support the child once they return to school.

If a bereaved child has been absent from school for a long period of time this can increase their anxieties and cause difficulties readjusting to school life.

Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent, but may have day to day care of the child. Unauthorised absence from school can result in a number of different outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered individually. Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter. The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold, currently 10 unauthorised sessions in 12 school week period, for a Penalty Notice to the Local Authority for legal action, unless there are reasonable grounds for not doing so. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a Penalty Notice or Prosecution. Penalty Notices are intended as a sanction for low level offences and a tool to support improved school attendance. They are an alternative to prosecution, and may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to a pupil's irregular attendance.

A pupil's unauthorised absence from school could result in one of the following: 1. A Penalty Notice. The penalty is £60 payable within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. (Failure to pay will result in prosecution.) 2. Prosecution. Prosecution could lead to fines up to £2500 and /or 3 months imprisonment.

For example, in the case of Penalty Notices, if two siblings had irregular school attendance, and there were two parents with responsibility for the children, four Penalty Notices would be issued.

Monitoring attendance

Attendance is monitored regularly.

- The Attendance Officer telephones families whose child is absent on the first day of absence when no reason has previously been given
- Teachers must inform the Co-Headteachers when they notice patterns of absence
- The Co-Headteachers analyses pupil attendance each term and takes follow up action when attendance is poor or patterns are noticed
- The EWO checks the registers every six weeks and identifies pupils with attendance of 90% and below and those with irregular attendance and poor punctuality
- The governors are informed of attendance analyses and returns at least annually
- **If a child's attendance falls to 93% or less the following will happen:**
 1. Parents/Carers will be invited to a meeting with the Co-headteacher to discuss their child's attendance and impact on learning. This letter will include how many hours of school a child has missed, specifically Reading, Writing and Maths lessons
 2. If poor attendance persists parents/carers will be invited to a meeting with the Family Worker and/or Safeguarding Officer and/or Education Welfare Officer to develop a plan of support to improve attendance. Visits to families at home will be arranged if necessary.
 3. If poor attendance continues the case will be formally referred to the Education Welfare Service
 4. If poor attendance continues, Penalty Notices and fines will be issued
 5. If poor attendance persists the Education Welfare Service will take the case to court

The regular monitoring and analysis of school registers enables patterns and trends to be identified. The aim throughout this monitoring process is to ensure all children have the best attendance possible. The school will work in partnership with parents/carers and will take into account individual circumstances, applying the process accordingly. The Attendance Monitoring file is kept in the Attendance Officer's work space.

Reporting attendance

To Parents

Three times each year (October, February and July) families will receive a report showing the percentage figures for their child/children's attendance and punctuality. The Attendance Officer produces attendance reports from SIMS Attendance Module. The report informs parents of the percentage expected and where there might be cause for concern. Parents are able to make an appointment with the Headteacher or a representative of the school to discuss any concerns they have. Parents are given information about whole school attendance in newsletters as appropriate.

To the Education Welfare Service

The Attendance Officer provides a print out of those children with attendance at 95% and below, to assist the Education Welfare Officer with their register check.

To the Governing Body

The Co-Headteachers' report includes an attendance update each term.

Promoting and rewarding good attendance

For ALL Pupils	
Daily	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Class teacher to ask any child why they were absent from school in a supportive manner. Report any inconsistencies to parent's reasons to Attendance Officer
Weekly	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The class with the best attendance in each year group receives a Golden Attendance Certificate 2. Each class that achieves the following percentage attendance receives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 97% Class Attendance Sticker 98% extra Golden Time 99% 10p to spend on the sweet trolley 100% 15p to spend on the sweet trolley 3. Random Name generated for Family in Friday's Celebration Assembly, if child shown is in school they win a book token to choose a book to be ordered for themselves 4. Every child with 100% attendance for the week gets 100% attendance school branded sticker 5. Weekly '100 Club'. All these children with 100% attendance for week are entered into a raffle drawn on a Friday. One name per year group wins prize from The Book Trolley
Half Termly	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children with 99% and 100% attendance for the half term receive a certificate in celebration assembly and have their names displayed on the school website, with a quote from them about why school is important everyday etc. 2. Children with half termly 100% are given the opportunity to do an 'alternative enrichment' activity with class based staff, decided collectively eg cooking activity, crafting, PE activity etc
Termly	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All classes with 97% attendance and above termly, earn one credit towards whole class chosen treat at end of year
Annually	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children with 100% attendance for the whole year receive a certificate and trophy/enamel badge at a special assembly parents/carers are invited to 2. Children with 100% also attend a special trip, such as visiting the local bowling alley or cinema for a private screening

	3. Create annually a Good School Attendance video with good attendees and most improved, to share key messages
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For Persistent Absentees-those with attendance of 90% or less (PAs)	
Daily	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Standard Daily texts to be sent to parents/carers of PAs encouraging school attendance 2. Class teacher to ask any child why they were absent from school in a supportive manner. Report any inconsistencies to parent's reasons to Attendance Officer 3. Class Teacher to put class based strategy in place that would motivate PA child to be in school, based on knowledge of child/family 4. PAs identified per class. Class teacher to make call to family, encourage return to school as soon as possible. Report response to link Assistant Head (AH) 5. Link AH to put pupil well-being call into family on second day of any PA absence. Report response to Co-Headteacher (CHT) 6. CHT to put pupil well-being call into family on third day of absence. Consider notifying EWO/FW/SO/AO to do a home visit. 7. PAs to be buddied up with good attendee to do daily task together 8. CHTs to do pupil conferencing with PAs, to ascertain reasons for poor attendance that they may not have control over
Weekly Rolling Programme	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CHTs/LAHs to meet with PAs in year group or Key Stage groups weekly on a circle-time activity to build relationships/self-esteem/value of being in school (every Monday 2.40-3.00pm) 2. 'Well done!' Postcards home weekly for PAs in every day ie 100% weekly attendance 3. Phone call home weekly for any improvement (Mondays) by class teachers.
Bi-weekly	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attendance Monitoring Meeting between CHT/EWO/AO/FW/SG every Tuesday at 1.30pm.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The policy and associated guidance will be discussed with staff and governors. Families will be informed of the attendance procedures via the school induction meetings and newsletters.

This policy was ratified by governors on December 13th 2021.

It will be reviewed in 2 years or sooner if regulations or our school strategy change.

Luton Education Welfare Service
Absence for Religious Observance
Guidance for Schools

The Legal Position

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 state that schools must authorise absence that is due to religious observance but the day must be:

- Exclusively set apart for religious observance; and
- Set apart by the parents' religious body (not the parents themselves)

If the religious body sets apart a single day for religious observance and the parents ask for 4 days leave of absence, the school is only required to allow one day. The rest is discretionary leave. All requests for discretionary leave must be made in advance.

Our Advice

In most cases that affect us in Luton, eg Eid, one day will be authorised and coded R.

Any additional days will have to be requested in advance, and a reason for the request provided. It is then up to schools to decide whether the request is reasonable and should be granted. Any further days agreed would then be coded C.

Any further days that pupils take that have not been authorised by the school, either because they were not requested in advance or were turned down on request, will be marked as unauthorised absences. And schools should not authorise extra days retrospectively.

Examples where it would not be appropriate to authorise further days:

- To do shopping prior to the religious observance day
- To prepare food etc for the day
- To recover after the festivities
- To pick up/drop off relatives at the airport

Examples where schools may decide to authorise further days:

- Where families are travelling to see or stay with relatives in another part of the country.

As with all authorised absence, schools should look at the individual circumstances rather than have a blanket policy.

It may also be appropriate to consider the child's attendance record in deciding whether or not to authorise further absences.

Appendix 1 - Registration Guidelines

Registers must be taken at the beginning of each session.

	Start	Register taken	Register closes	Session ends
Morning				
Foundation Stage	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	11.30
Key Stage 1				
Year 1	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	12.00
Year 2	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	12.15
Key Stage 2				
Year 3	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	11.45
Year 4	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	12.00
Year 5	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	12.30
Year 6	8.50	8.55 – 9.00	9.05	12.15
Afternoon				
Foundation Stage	12.30	12.35	12.40	3.20
Key Stage 1				
Year 1	1.00	1.05	1.10	3.20
Year 2	1.15	1.20	1.25	3.20
Key Stage 2				
Year 3	12.45	12.50	12.55	3.25
Year 4	1.00	1.05	1.10	3.25
Year 5	1.30	1.35	1.40	3.25
Year 6	1.15	1.20	1.25	3.25

Only mark in the children who are present in the class, all other pupils are absent. Please ensure that late arrivals report to the school office.

The Attendance Officer will record reasons for absence and lateness on the computer system.

Any notes or messages received in class about absence should be sent/relayed to the Attendance Officer in the school office.

Appendix 2 Registration codes:

Code	School Meaning	Statistical Meaning	Physical Meaning
/	Present (AM)	Present	In for whole session
\	Present (PM)	Present	In for whole session
@	Do NOT use	Unauthorised Absence	Late for session
B	Educated off site (not dual reg)	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
C	Other authorised circumstances	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
D	Dual registration (attending other establishment)	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess)	Unauthorised absence	Out for whole session
I	Illness (not med/dental appointment)	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
L	Late (before reg closed)	Present	Late for session
M	Medical / Dental appointment	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence	Out for whole session
O	Unauthorised circumstances (not covered by other code)	Unauthorised Absence	Out for whole session
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Educational Activity	In for whole session
R	Religious observance	Authorised Absence	In for whole session
T	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence	Late for session
V	Educational visit	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
X	DCFS # School closed to pupils	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
Y	Enforced closure	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
#	School closed to pupils and staff	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
-	All should attend. No mark recorded	No mark	No mark for session

APPENDIX 3 – Procedure for when a child is absent.

