

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

'To Love and To Serve'



Attendance Policy

Includes Absences/Special leave and Children Missing in Education (CME)

Review Date: November 2021

ATTENDANCE POLICY

School attendance is subject to various Education laws. This school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and the Local Authority. This Policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance.

Mission Statement

- The school's educational programme is intentionally directed at the growth of the whole person: to develop pupils who can accept responsibility, whose lives reflect Christian values and who recognise knowledge is important but its chief value is in giving service to others. We aim to create a Christian Community in our school whose values are communicated through love and sincere relationships between all its members, a community in which each person can develop his or her human potential as fully as possible with a view to a personal commitment to Christ. The school recognises that it can achieve its aims only in partnership with parents who are the first and foremost educators of the child.
- To make prayer, worship and liturgy real educational experiences and to contribute successfully to the development of the Faith of each individual in the school community.
- To create an active school community which values the individual but promotes respect for others and provides through links with home-parish-school preparation for the pupils' entry into the wider community.
- To ensure that the curriculum provides a Catholic setting in which the pupils have an entitlement to grow in understanding and an entitlement to the acquisition of skills, attitudes and values.
- To ensure that all the pupils in the school experience a caring community which promotes the importance of Christian principles in relationships.
- To show concern in a school that looks to Christ for the basis of its existence, for all those outside the school regardless of colour, class or creed.
- To encourage pupils to critically evaluate standards and values in society to enable them to strengthen their own beliefs.

Rationale

We are committed to providing a full and efficient education for all pupils and we embrace the concept of equal opportunity. We recognise that regular attendance and punctuality is essential for every child's academic, social and personal progression and development. Children who do not attend school regularly are not only missing out on their education but are also missing out socially.

Therefore we will work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children and we are committed to putting systems in place that will result in the majority of children achieving the highest possible attendance.

We are aware that parents/carers are responsible for their child's punctuality and attendance and we are committed to working in partnership with them, seeking to overcome any issues that are resulting in unacceptable levels of attendance. Early intervention and prevention of poor attendance will be implemented.

Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for their absence.

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the school approves pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (where the school will not approve absence)

The school has a legal duty to keep a record of each absence and to establish a reason. Where a child has continued absence or lateness the school's Education Welfare Officer will be informed.

How will we encourage good attendance?

- We will provide a teaching and learning environment which is welcoming, secure and stimulating, where children are respected and valued as individuals.
- Children who achieve 100% attendance and punctuality will be recognised with a certificate.
- We will raise awareness of the importance of attendance by an attendance award to the class with the highest attendance/punctuality.

The school will use the following system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance.

- Termly attendance and punctuality certificate
- Whole year attendance and punctuality certificate
- Termly attendance newsletter to share 100% attendance with parents

Procedure and actions that will be taken

A consistent approach to managing attendance will be applied and all absences will be challenged in a positive and supportive manner.

- Class teachers will complete registers accurately twice a day.
- On the first day of absence parents should telephone the school to inform them why their child is unable to attend and how long they are expected to be absent.
- Where no explanation is given for a pupil's absence, the school office will make a telephone call to ascertain the reason for absence. This does not replace the parents' responsibility to notify the school and to provide a written reason for absence.
- Where a child returns to school without written notification of absence, a letter will be sent to the child's parents/carers requesting an explanation.
- Absence notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.
- Where attendance gives rise to concern, parents will be contacted by the School and given details of attendance levels and/or lateness.
- Presently pupils whose attendance falls below 85% in any one term may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer (even if notification has been given, unless for serious illness), and no further absence will be authorised.
- A pupil becomes a Persistent Absentee when absence falls below 90%.
- Whilst teachers will make every effort to enable absentees to make good work that has been missed, the nature of teaching and learning style means that this is not always possible. Work will not be set where parents have requested absence for an annual family holiday during term time.
- If a child is absent from school she/he should not be on the school site during the day of the absence.
- A Welcome Back: it is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

Ten Days Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Frequent Absence

Registers are monitored fortnightly by the Administrative Officer to identify any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem, depending on severity, using strategies such as:

- Referral to the Assistant Head to offer support to parents in raising attendance
- A letter home outlining expectations
- A pre referral meeting with the Assistant Headteacher and the Educational Welfare Officer
- A referral to the Educational Welfare Officer

Where attendance falls below 90% and is attributed to ill health or medical reasons absence must be supported by written proof - appointment cards, medical evidence, such as sight of a prescription or medicine bottle/packet with the child's name and the date issued, if it is to be recorded as authorised absence. The School will inform parents in writing where this becomes necessary.

The school will also refer the child to the Educational Welfare Officer and/or the School Nurse if there is a high level of absence for medical reasons.

For pupils who have a diagnosed medical condition that may impact on good attendance, the school will work with parents to ensure that these pupils are provided with relevant work to complete at home when absent that must be returned to school to be marked by the class teacher. The School may also offer a referral to the Additional Needs Unit, depending on individual circumstances.

Term-time lasts for 38 weeks of the year and all children are expected to achieve 100% attendance. So, the onus is on the parent/carer to ensure a child attends school every day without fail, unless they are ill or have a medical/dental appointment.

Family holidays during term time

Parents are not allowed to take children out of school for holidays during term time as it can have a damaging effect on a pupil's education and overall achievement.

Absence and Exceptional Leave

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to take children out for longer planned absence. All such cases should be discussed with the Headteacher, as a child who is absent longer than 10 days after an agreed return date, can legally be removed from the school roll. This will mean that your child/ren will lose their school place at St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School.

In considering whether or not to authorise leave of absence, the school will consider each case individually, taking into account a child's overall attendance and the reason for the absence.

- Leave of absence forms can be obtained from the school office and all requests should be submitted to the school as far in advance as is possible.
- The request must include the reason why it is necessary to take such absence during term time, including any extenuating or compassionate reasons, including evidence of circumstances such as medical certificate
- On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. A letter outlining the decision of the school (whether absence is authorised or unauthorised) will be sent within 7 days.

- Any leave of absence that is not authorised is very likely to result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £120 per parent, per child.

Leave of absence taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheap flights or accommodation
- Availability of desired resort or accommodation
- Poor weather previously experienced in school holiday period
- Overlap in conjunction with the beginning or end of term

Children Missing in Education (CME)

A Child Missing from Education (CME) is defined by the Department for Education (DfE) as "a child of compulsory school age who is not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) and who has been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually four weeks or more)." In Merton, referrals for CME are accepted after 10 working days of reasonable checks being carried out by the educational provider and their Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (amended - Education and Inspections Act 2006) requires all local authorities to make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving a "suitable education". We stand a better chance of ensuring a child's safety if we know how and where they are receiving their education.

By "suitable education" we mean efficient full-time education suitable to the child's age. Children Missing from Education should **not** be confused with children who are on roll at a school but are not in regular attendance. In this case, referrals should be made to the Education Welfare Service.

Lateness

Your child's punctuality at our school is very important to us and is carefully monitored. We take lateness very seriously.

Persistent lateness disadvantages children, as they are likely to miss the instruction for the morning. It is also disruptive to children already involved in the lesson. Persistent lateness is unacceptable and will result in the school contacting parents.

The School gates open between 8.40 and 8.45am for all children to enter to go straight into class for early learning. Registration will take place at 8:45 am. Any pupil arriving after 9:00 am will be marked as late. If they arrive after 9.30am, without an acceptable reason they will be marked as having an absence. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

The afternoon registration will be

12.30 pm Nursery
 12.30 pm Reception
 12.45 pm Year 1
 12.45 pm Year 2
 1.30 pm Year 3/4/5
 1.00 pm Year 6

Procedures and Actions that will be taken

Completing the register

Registers provide the daily record of the attendance for all pupils; they are documents **that may be required** in a **court of law**, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They also contribute to pupils' end of term reports and to records of achievement.

- If a child is not in class when the register is taken, he/she should be marked absent by the class teacher
- Children who arrive in school after 9.00am **must** report to the office with parent or carer, not go straight to class. The reason for lateness form must be completed.

Our Expectations of Parents and Carers

Parents and carers should:

- Recognise their legal responsibility in ensuring regular attendance and understand the link between attendance and attainment
- Understand that action can be instigated against parents and carers whose children fail to sustain an acceptable level of attendance
- Help their child to understand the importance of coming to school
- Work in partnership with the school to encourage good attendance
- Value their child's right to education and ensure that s/he comes to school regularly, arrives on time and does not miss school for unacceptable reasons
- Communicate to the school any issues or problems that are affecting attendance
- Telephone the school, write or talk to a member of staff to explain any illness on the first day of absence and provide reasons for lateness
- Make all appointments outside school time. In the event that this is not possible, then parents/carers are asked to inform the school in writing prior to the date of the appointment
- Assist their child in catching up on missed work.
- Take holidays in holiday time.
- Parents do not have the right to withdraw their child from school for holidays and the school does not have to give permission.
- Not take their child away from school during times of national tests; the school will not sanction any absence during these times
- Cooperate with the school, Education Welfare Officer and any other agency to secure maximum attendance for their child.

Appendices

1 The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and
 - [b] To any special needs he may have.
- either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in:
The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

The Education Act 1996 -sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)

Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

[Working together to safeguard children 2018](#)

Attendance Targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. Progress towards these targets will be analysed regularly by a member of the Senior Leadership Team and strategies adopted in line with this policy will be implemented to achieve or exceed the target. It is the responsibility of the parents, staff and pupils at St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School to ensure good attendance and achievement of targets.

Our school target for:

2020/21- 96%

2. Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

Agreed by school governors

Signed: (Chair of Governors) – signed paper copy held on file

Date of review: November 2020

Please read together with the Addendum to Attendance Policy 2020/2021 – not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

[ADDENDUM TO ATTENDANCE POLICY - 2020 - 2021.pdf](#)



St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

ABSENCE AND EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE POLICY

The Governors of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School believe that leave of absence during term time should be avoided as it can have a damaging effect on a student's education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that on occasions there may be extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify such leave.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Amendment Regulations 2013 state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

With regard to the regulation outlined above the school policy is as follows:

1. Parents must request leave for exceptional circumstances as far in advance as possible.
2. The request should be made in writing using the leave of absence form. (Available from the school office)
3. This must include the reason why you feel that it is necessary to take a leave of absence. This may include any extenuating or compassionate reasons, including evidence of circumstances such as medical certificate or letter from employers.

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form **together with any supporting documentation**, consideration will be given to the circumstance. A letter outlining the decision of the school will be sent to you within 7 days.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised is very likely to result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £120.00.

Request for Leave of Absence Form

Surname: _____

Forename: _____

Class: _____

Dates of absence: From: _____

 To: _____

Number of days required (please do not count weekends/bank holidays or Inset days): _____

Reason for request (additional evidence may be required):

Signed: Parent/Guardian Date:

For internal use only

The above request for leave of absence in term time for your child/children has been:

Authorised

Unauthorised

If authorised, your child/ren should return to school on: _____

Remarks:

Head Teacher's signature: Date:



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Email: office@st-thomascanterbury.merton.sch.uk
Website: www.st-thomascanterbury.merton.sch.uk
Head Teacher: Mrs M Tucker - BA Hons, PGCE

Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian

LEAVE OF ABSENCE (only in exceptional circumstances)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Amendment Regulations 2013 state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. This may include any extenuating or compassionate reasons, including evidence of circumstance such as medical certificate/death certificate or letter from employers. Parents must request leave for exceptional circumstances as far in advance as possible. The request should be made on the green leave of absence form.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised is very likely to result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £120.00.

We have to abide by government legislation so if your child is absent from school we will have no alternative but to mark your child as unauthorised.

In future please bring any original documentation to the main school office where it will be placed on your child's file and the attendance mark can then be changed from unauthorised to authorised.

If you are delayed for any reason while returning from travelling documentation will need to be provided.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Mrs M Tucker
Head Teacher

The School will use a computerised system for keeping the school attendance records.
The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
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
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	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	Approved Education Activity
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	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years.

Computer registers must be printed out at least once a month and bound into annual volumes.