



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

St Margaret's Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from their education, good attendance is crucial. As a school, we organise and do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede full attendance will be identified and addressed as soon as possible.

Purpose

1. To ensure that good attendance has a high priority with pupils, parents and teachers.
2. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence.
3. To recognise that matters relating to the quality of the curriculum and teaching and to the school's ethos and relationships are most significant in encouraging good attendance.
4. To understand the action that can be taken by the Local Authority to ensure good attendance.

Rights, responsibilities and roles

School

1. All staff will understand the registration process in the school.

2. All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, and returned to the school office promptly.

NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable; they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.

3. The school will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents through a variety of media: the school's website, newsletters and parents meetings.
4. The school will inform parents weekly of attendance figures and annually of the whole school attendance target via the school newsletter.
5. The school will accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness.
6. The school will have clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness, allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
7. The school will annually review its attendance policy and associated procedures.

Parents

1. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action.
2. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
3. Parents are responsible for immediately informing school of the reason for any absence by phone call on the first morning of any absence and thereafter.
4. Parents can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record.

Authorised/Unauthorised absence

All absences must be explained by a parent. The school will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence.

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences are:

- Illness (1)
- Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement
- Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (2)

This list is not exhaustive.

(1) Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a child has been absent for 3 days or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below 95% and/or is regularly away from school due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being unauthorised.

Medical evidence can be provided in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication or an appointment card showing name of child and date they visited.

(2) Unavoidable medical/dental appointments

All routine (non emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a pupil need to have an appointment during school hours, such as in an emergency, hospital or CAMHS appointment, evidence of this will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school unauthorising the absence.

Term time holiday

As of the 1st September 2013, the Government has made amendments to the 2006 Attendance Regulations and has removed references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

All absence requests forms will be considered on a case by case basis and only authorised where there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a pupil can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Absences from school will not be authorised for:

- Holidays
- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Looking after family members
- Visiting relatives

We will not authorise any leave of absence during the months of May or September.

Requesting the absence

All requests for a child to be absent from School during term time must be made in writing at least a half term in advance of the proposed absence by completing the absence request form obtainable from Reception.

The Headteacher (or person with delegated responsibility) will decide whether or not to authorise the absence, on a case by case basis, and will only do so where there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision.

If the absence is unauthorised and still taken, the school may request the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice to the parents/carers for the unauthorised absence.

If no absence request is made

If a child is absent from School during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the School will write to the parents/carers to inform them that the absence has not been authorised and that a Penalty Notice may be issued.

If parents/carers can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an **exceptional circumstance** and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the absence, then a Penalty Notice will not be issued.

The Penalty Notice carries a penalty of £60 if paid in full within 21 days or £120 if paid in full after this time but within 28 days. The Local Authority are unable to accept part or late payments and there is no legal right to appeal the Penalty Notice once it has been issued. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid, this is likely to result in Court proceedings being taken against you for an offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance contrary to section 444 Education Act 1996. If convicted, you may face a fine of up to £2500 and/or a maximum 3 months imprisonment.

Please note: only **one** Penalty Notice will be issued **in any two year period**. This means that if a Penalty Notice is paid, and the child accumulates a further 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (5 school days), this will result in the parent/carer receiving a summons to Court for an offence contrary to s444 Education Act. The matter cannot be dealt with by way of a further Penalty Notice being issued.

Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per child. A 'parent' can be any person, whether a natural parent or not, who has care of the child or young person.

Procedures for reporting absence

First day reporting

- Parents are reminded of the absence procedure at the beginning of each term via the school newsletter.
- A reason for absence is always required verbally by phone, or by email. The school may then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence. If no reason is provided within one week of return the school will mark the absences as unauthorised.
- On each day of absence the parent/carer should ring school before 09:30am to inform the office that their child will be away and give a reason for the absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is requested.

- Staff should remind parent(s)/carer(s) to contact the school each day unless there is a definitive timescale of absence. For example there needs to be 48 hours clear from last bout of sickness and/or diarrhoea.
- Admin staff keeps a log of absence calls and reasons received each day.
- Immediately after registration class teachers send their registers to the office.
- If any member of staff is concerned about an absence they will liaise with the admin staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge for the absence. If still concerned they will relay to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.
- Between 09:30am - 11am admin staff will text or call parents/carers of any child whose absence is unexplained.

If there is still no contact or explanation of child's absence:

- The school will work through the list of named contacts on the address card. If still no reason/response given then and if they have a sibling at another school, the other school will be contacted to try and find a reason or ascertain whether there are shared concerns
- If those steps have not been successful, admin staff will notify the designated safeguarding lead who may speak to the school's Welfare and attendance worker or family support worker if they are in school and / or the Head teacher. A home visit may be deemed appropriate.
- School will inform the Local Authority within 10 school days or sooner of a child's continued absence from school and a Children Missing from Education (CME) referral will be made to the Local Authority.

If the pupil is subject to a child protection plan or if the school has particular safeguarding concerns, the school will immediately notify the Safeguarding Hub and the Local Authority.

Lateness

There are two negative results caused by pupils who constantly arrive late. These are:

- The loss of education suffered by the pupil which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.
- The disruption to other pupils in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

- School gates will be locked at 8:55am prompt. Pupils who arrive after 8:55am are considered 'Late' (L) and will be required to enter the school via reception to sign in and record the reason for their late arrival.
- Pupils who arrive after 09:10am should be considered as 'Late (after registers close)' (U).
- All teachers will record the appropriate late mark in the registers.
- All pupils' attendance records will be checked every half term for lates before registers close (L) and lates after registers close (U).
- Where these late arrivals accumulate to 5 or more in a half term the family becomes closely monitored and where necessary referred to our Family Support Worker to discuss any support needs and ways of accessing support.

Attendance letters

All pupils' with attendance below 95% will be analysed by our Welfare and attendance Officer on a fortnightly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

The following actions may be taken:

Attendance letter 1 will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 95%.

Attendance letter 2 will be sent 2 weeks after letter 1 or later in the same academic year if attendance has not improved, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with our Attendance Officer.

Attendance letter 3 will be sent if parents/carers do not attend the meeting and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with our Attendance Officer and/or Deputy Head.

If, at any time, a child has 10 or more unauthorised absences within a 6 months period, the school will seek advice from the Local Authority to consider legal options available. Legal options include: Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and Prosecution. Please see the Local Authority website for further details.

Strategies for promoting attendance

Every week there is a class competition to gain the highest attendance rate. The winning class is announced in our Celebration Assembly and receive a certificate. Those children in the winning class have 5 minutes extra playtime. Should the winning class have 100% attendance then they have 10 minutes extra playtime. If a class has the highest attendance rate 3 times in the academic year, they earn a non-uniform day.

At the end of the Academic year all children with 100% attendance are awarded with a certificate.

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