



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 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. For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

Purpose

1. To ensure that good attendance has a high priority with pupils, parents and teachers.
2. To have clear, relevant guidelines for keeping registers which are carefully and routinely carried out by staff.
3. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence.
4. 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.
5. 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. All pupils' with attendance below 95% will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.
7. The school will have clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness, allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
8. The school will annually review its attendance policy and associated procedures. procedures in consultation with the Local Authorities Attendance Improvement Service

Parents/Carers

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 (at the latest by 9:30am) 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.
5. Parents/carers should not take their child on holiday in term time and are to be made aware of the potential consequences of a Penalty Notice being issued or subsequent prosecution of doing so without the school's prior written permission.

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)

(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.

(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, evidence of this appointment 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.

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 the 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 said absence, then a Penalty Notice will not be issued.

Please be aware:

Parents/carers who take their child out of school without prior written authorisation from the school may be subject to a £60 penalty notice per child, per parent from the Local Authority.

Parents/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

Nonpayment of the penalty within those timescales may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court under s444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

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.

Absences from school will not be authorised for:

- Holidays not agreed
- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Looking after family members
- Visiting relatives

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

Procedures for reporting absence

First day reporting

- Parents are reminded of the absence procedure at the beginning of each term via the school newsletter.
- 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.
- 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 - 10:30am admin staff will text or phone the parents (and emergency contacts) of any pupil whose absence is unexplained and on each consecutive day that the absence remains unexplained. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed of any pupil whose absence is unexplained. This information may be relayed to Children's Services.
- If a child remains absent for a second day without any notification as to why, the school will call any other contacts that have been provided, including grandparents and work.
- If a child remains absent for three days without any notification, a member of staff will visit the home address.
- If, after three days, the school has concerns about the child's whereabouts and wellbeing, the school will contact the Torbay Education Safeguarding Service (TESS) for advice.
- It remains the schools responsibility to try to contact the parent and visit the home if necessary.
- If after 10 days, the child has continued unauthorised absence, a Child Missing Education (CME) referral will be made to the Attendance Improvement Service.

If the child is subject to a child protection plan or if the school has particular safeguarding concerns and feel the child is at risk of immediate harm, the school will immediately notify the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) without waiting for 10 schools days.

A child may be referred to the MASH if it is considered that they have totally disengaged from learning and/or the parent is subject to statutory intervention.

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.
- Late gates will be implemented on a regular basis.
- 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 Attendance & Welfare Officer to discuss any support needs and ways of accessing support.

Attendance letters

All pupils' with attendance below 95% will be analysed 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 pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences equating to 10% within a 6 months period, the school may attend a legal consultation with 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 those children have 5 minutes extra playtime. Should the winning class have 100% attendance then they have 10 minutes extra playtime.

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

Reviewed April 2016

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