



St. Matthew's
Roman Catholic High School
VOLUNTARY ACADEMY



Attendance Policy

Reviewed:

January 2024

To be reviewed:

January 2025



We **Pray**
We **Care**
We **Achieve**

MISSION

Statement



St. Matthew's
Roman Catholic High School

All policies and procedures are underpinned by our School Mission Statement:



WE PRAY

As a community with Christ and with the teachings of the Gospel at our centre, shown in the things we do and in the ways we worship together.



WE CARE

For everyone in our school community, respecting them as individuals created by God and recognising and celebrating talents and successes. We see caring for others in the world outside of our school as part of our Christian responsibility.



WE ACHIEVE

The best we can in all aspects of school life by learning in lessons, succeeding in examinations and committing to extra-curricular activities.



We **Pray** · We **Care** · We **Achieve**

Equality information & objectives

Policy

All policies and procedures are underpinned by our School Mission Statement;

- We pray as a community with Christ and with the teachings of the Gospel at our centre, shown in the things we do and in the ways we worship together.
- We care for everyone in our school community, respecting them as individuals created by God and recognising and celebrating talents and successes. We see caring for others in the world outside of our school as part of our Christian responsibility.
- We achieve the best we can in all aspects of school life by learning in lessons, succeeding in examinations and committing to extra-curricular activities.

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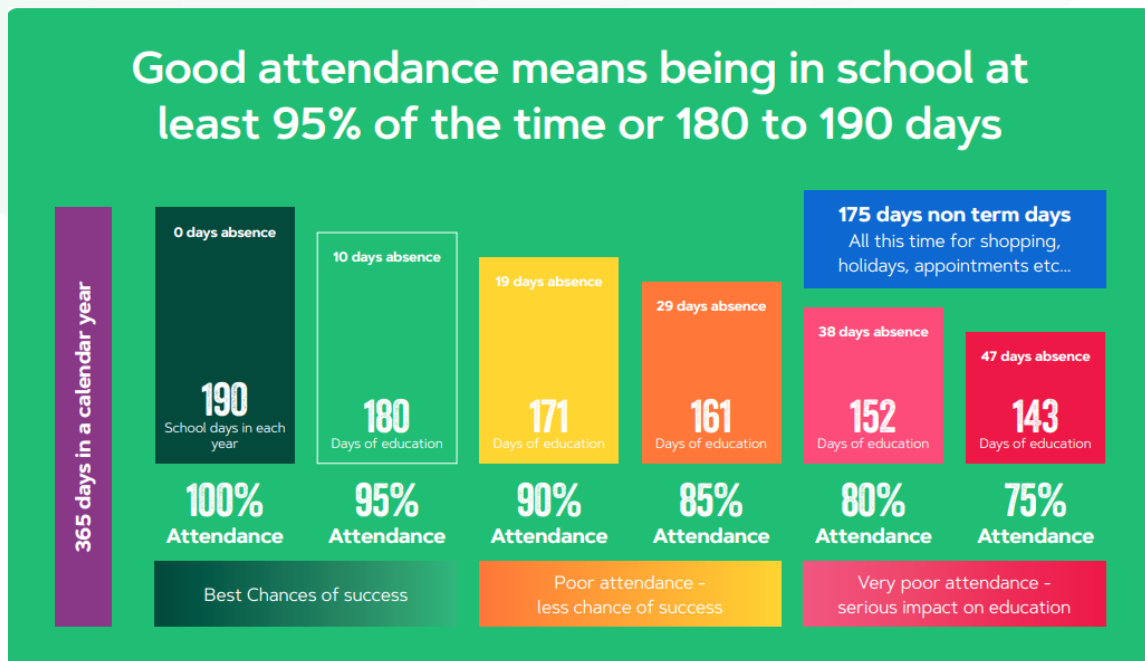
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1. Aims

Regular school attendance is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. St. Matthew's believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. St. Matthew's values all students and we will work with families to identify the reasons for unsatisfactory attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and SEN. We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.
- Supporting families with children with additional needs through reasonable adjustments that seek to improve overall attendance over time



2. Legislation & guidance

Parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2016, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session.

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles & responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
 - Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
 - Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
 - Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
 - Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
 - Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
 - Annually reviewing the school's attendance policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement it
- The link governor for attendance is Mrs Jennifer Clayton

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Mr Nightingale, the Headteacher is the only person who can authorise leave in 'exceptional circumstances'

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- The Deputy headteacher responsible for attendance is Mr Antonio Passarello and can be contacted via

a.passarello@smrchs.com

3.4 The attendance lead

The school attendance lead is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with the local authority and Early Help to tackle regular attendance issues
- Advising the Deputy headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Making swift and regular home visits to homes of families when attendance is unreported or shows a concerning trend
- Leading the attendance manager and attendance officers to fulfil their roles and responsibilities
 - The attendance officer is Ms Gail Matthew and can be contacted via g.matthew@smrchs.com

3.5 Pastoral Year teams (Director, Head of Year and Student Welfare Lead)

- Monitoring the attendance figures daily.
- Make daily phone calls or meet with parents, when necessary, to improve attendance.
- Interview pupils weekly that fall into the Amber group
- Attend strategic Attendance Planning Meetings when necessary.
- Ensure attendance has a high profile in assemblies, form briefings and all meetings
- Regular and consistent rewarding of high attendance is routine
- Pupils with long term medical problems are identified and the necessary strategies are implemented to support them
- Attend Attendance Planning Meetings when necessary
- Use Manchester Local Authority's Early Help procedures as a response to improve attendance and facilitate support for pupils and their families.

3.6 All teaching staff

All teaching staff are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information on either SIMS or EDULINK during statutory recording sessions and every other lesson time.

Registration:	Statutory
Period 1:	Statutory
Period 2:	School policy
Period 3:	School policy
Period 4:	Statutory
Period 5:	School policy
Extracurricular:	School policy

3.7 School admin/office staff

School admin/office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the attendance team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.8 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:30am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return. (Families who do not call will receive a first-day call by the year team and if this is not answered, a home visit will be prioritised for the same day)
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Support the school aims and objectives by insisting on high patterns of attendance, resilience with seasonal illnesses and trust in our ability to care for students who may feel ill or vulnerable on given days

3.9 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Attend every timetabled session on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.
- Pupils must arrive in school by 8:30am on each school day.
- The register for the first session will be taken at 8:35am and will be kept open until 9:00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:25pm and will be kept open until 1:20pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:30am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school admin/office staff and/or attendance team (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

- If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Any leave of absence requests must be made to the headteacher via his PA. This can be emailed to contact@smrchs.com or k.gibson@smrchs.com

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Religious Observance

St. Matthew's acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration by written request by the parent of authorised absence. Such absence will be authorised up to a maximum of two days annually.

Study Leave

Study leave may be granted for Year 11 pupils approaching examinations. School will offer in school study programmes during this period to reduce absence levels.

Traveller Absence

It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

St. Matthew's will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the student must have attended in the last 18 months.

Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the student's school place will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

St. Matthew's can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates. St. Matthew's will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school.
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service.
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- Students who arrive after 8:45am will have to register with a member of the attendance team. Two late marks of this type in one week will result in a same day 60-minute detention
- Students who arrive after 9:30am will receive a half-day absence code and these will count towards a fixed penalty notice should they add up to the equivalent of one-week (10 sessions)
- Letters will be sent home each term to indicate how many minutes students have missed during registration periods. This information will be linked to attainment and post-16 choices/chances and expectations

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may will make a same day home visit. If contact can not be made, the police will be contacted
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the local authority and Early Help

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. Parents can check this daily on EDULINK. We will add attendance to our three termly progress reports. Additional letters and updates will be sent as required.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as unavoidable instances that lead to attendance in school being impractical.

Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least three weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via our attendance team. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.

If a student fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the student off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2016. This means that the child will lose their school place. If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrates court

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Other circumstances may be granted, for example:

- Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the headteacher may grant term-time holiday
- Study leave
- Flexi-schooling requests – where the educational entitlement and wellbeing of the student is not impacted

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- An accumulation of half-day absences that have added up due to persistent lateness
- If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We promote strong attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- One daily R point is given for students who attend on-time. Five consecutive R points leads to an additional two. This is known as our "SMRCHS Super 7" reward
- Termly certificates are given to those with high attendance, improving attendance with special school badges given to those with full attendance
- To encourage attendance at key times, we host daily prizes and activities to promote high standards
- Case studies are created to benchmark students with high or improving standards of attendance
- Admission to end of year events contains an attendance/improved pattern of attendance criteria
- Half-termly attendance panels are held with families (and supported by the Trust and/or governing body) to ensure that patterns of attendance and punctuality improve for key families

7. Attendance monitoring

Attendance is monitored in the following ways:

- First-day absences are identified and calls are made by 10:30am each day
- Daily totals are sent to the senior team for analysis each day
- Trends and areas of concern are identified and the following days home visits are supplemented by directed visits to priority families
- Key cohorts of students are prioritized for support. These include students at risk of persistent absenteeism (PA), severe absenteeism (SA), those in identified groups (SEND, Pupil Premium, Young Carers) and those who can be considered as safeguarding priority groups (history of encompass information, "at risk students", "looked after students" and those who we have existing concerns about.
- Fortnightly meetings between the safeguarding, attendance and SEND teams ensures that information sharing and communication is a priority
- Weekly patterns such as sibling absences, broken weeks and patterns of absence are identified with concerns followed up by the attendance and safeguarding lead, Simone Ross.
- Weekly patterns are analysed and compared to attendance at the same point in the previous year, National and Regional FFT data and any other data we may have from the local area.

› 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Formally monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Routinely analyse daily attendance for patterns of concern
- Report to governors each term on key priority indicators

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Take into considerations the needs of students who are considered vulnerable or who are on our SEN register

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Analyse daily attendance figures and key groups of absent students to inform actions for the following days interventions
- Provide regular attendance reports to pastoral teams and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Monitor those at risk of slipping into a PA or SA category so that support can be proactive rather than reactive

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum 12 months by Mr Antonio Passarello, Deputy Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

Child protection and safeguarding policy

Behaviour policy

SEND policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day



St. Matthew's

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VOLUNTARY ACADEMY

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DIocese of  SALFORD

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