

St Matthew's Primary School Attendance Policy

1. Aims and Objectives – Our policy aims to:

- emphasise the importance to all pupils and families that maximum attendance at school is vital for achieving their full potential;
- reinforce the notion that every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled and that parents are responsible in law for the regular and punctual attendance of their child;
- make explicit to all (pupils, parents/carers, teachers) the school's expectations on attendance levels and support strategies to help pupils maximise their attendance;
- stress the need for home and school to work in partnership to achieve high attendance;
- promote a consistent approach across the school towards attendance matters;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties linked to attendance at school and in the Local Authority.

The school sees **95% attendance as the minimum expectation** for all pupils and strives for all pupils to attend more than 97%. Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 and September 2013 make clear that Head teachers may not authorise holidays (or other leave of absence) in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school upholds these regulations and will consider the use of financial penalties and court action where necessary.

2. Procedures and Practices

Registration

Registration takes place twice a day: at 8.45am and at 1:00pm/1:30pm (depending on key stage).

Lateness

Any pupil arriving in school after registration has been taken will be recorded as 'L' (late). If they arrive after the registration period has finished and the gates have been locked, they will need to enter school by the office where they will be recorded as 'U' (unauthorised absence). At St Matthew's Primary School, the registration period is **10 minutes long** and ends at 8:55 in the morning and 1:10 or 1:40 in the afternoon. Unauthorised absence at the beginning of the day is particularly damaging to a child's academic and social progress and for this reason will be treated very seriously by the school and the EWO (Education Welfare Officer).

Absences

Absences from school will be either 'Authorised' or 'Unauthorised' depending upon the circumstance.

Authorised absences are where a pupil has been absent and a satisfactory and legal reason has been communicated to the school or the child is representing the school or is on an educational visit. Other reasons include: genuine illness, days of religious observance, unavoidable medical appointments, exceptional circumstances (bereavement / marriage of immediate family member or traveller children going 'on the road'). The school expects authorised absences to be kept to a minimum and therefore routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours or during school holidays wherever possible. Where absence through illness has led to attendance of below 85%, parents and carers will be expected to provide evidence of illness and/or appointments.

Unauthorised absences are when no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents or carers or the reason provided is not deemed as acceptable by the school. Examples of these may

be lateness after the end of registration, attending a birthday celebration, minding a house, caring for a sibling, shopping or going on holiday.

The school, using DfE guidelines, makes the final decision about whether or not any absence is seen as authorised or unauthorised. Parents who wish to request absence may do so by completing an absence request form (available from the school office or the “Useful Forms” section of the school website at https://stmatthews.eschools.co.uk/website/useful_forms/143536) and returning it to the school office.

Term-Time holidays

The school cannot authorise holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. St Matthew’s Primary School follows the new DfE guidelines from September 2013 that states that requests for long-term leave can only be granted in ‘exceptional circumstances’ and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. No term-time leave will be granted, or deemed granted without a formal request on the appropriate forms (available from the school office or the website). Interviews following a request may be conducted prior to any decision being made. The school will not authorise any holidays retrospectively and may follow up any reported illness that we feel may have been a term time holiday. The absence request form is in Appendix 5.

3. Strategies used to support and improve attendance at school

Pupils

Pupils are encouraged to attend regularly (minimum of 95%) and punctually. However, we recognise that in primary school it is the responsibility of the parent to bring them and to be on time.

Parents

Parents and carers (or whichever adult the pupil lives or is staying with) are legally responsible for the child’s attendance at school and must ensure that pupils attend, regularly and on time. They could be subject to criminal prosecution should their child’s attendance fall below acceptable levels. We expect parents to:

- telephone or email school on or before the first day of their child’s absence to notify school of the absence;
- provide satisfactory medical evidence when required to do so;
- attend attendance planning meetings when requested to do so with staff from school and the Education Welfare Officer when necessary.

School

All staff in school have roles and responsibilities (see Appendix 2) that combine to keep the attendance of pupils both high profile and supported to improve. They undertake a variety of tasks and actions that all combine to help keep the attendance rates of individuals and the overall attendance rate for the school high.

School will:

- roll call registration twice a day (am and pm);
- contact the parent/carer by telephone on the first day of absence if no notification is received;
- monitor attendance;
- write letters to parents highlighting absence and requesting explanations;
- investigate unexplained absences (if no satisfactory evidence is received within 10 days, the absence will remain recorded as unauthorised);
- hold attendance planning meetings to discuss how school can support parents or carers to improve attendance and to set targets;
- include attendance information on end-of-year reports;
- refer to the Education Welfare Officer when attendance falls below 85%

The Local Authority (LA)

The Local Authority (Cambridgeshire County Council) holds the statutory responsibility for school attendance for pupils in all Cambridgeshire schools. Education Welfare Officers act on behalf of the LA to promote attendance and in partnership with schools, enforce attendance through the use of legal sanctions when necessary. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will:

- liaise with schools to help identify children whose attendance is unacceptable;
- write to parents requesting their attendance at planning meetings and Police And Criminal Evidence (PACE) meetings as appropriate;
- hold planning meetings with schools and parents to assist with the planning to meet attendance targets;
- carry out home visits when appropriate;
- carry out assessments and broker supportive interventions from a range of external agencies such as the locality team (family work, youth support) when necessary;
- request the imposition of legal sanctions such as penalty notices, parent contracts, education attendance orders and fines.

Useful Guidance and Websites

Further guidance relating to attendance is recommended to all staff, parents, carers and governors and can be found in the following publications:

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/schools

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – School Register Codes
- Appendix 2 – Roles and Responsibilities
- Appendix 3 – Intervention Strategies
- Appendix 4 – Information about Term Time Holidays
- Appendix 5 - Request for a pupil to be absent from school

Appendix 1 – School Register codes

The DfE offers a comprehensive set of register codes which all schools are required to use. These codes are as follows:

- /\ - Present am/pm
- B - Educated off site - Approved Educational Activity.
- C - Other authorised circumstances (including public performances licensed by the local authority, family bereavements, exceptional special occasions) - Authorised Absence.
- D - Dual registration (i.e pupil attending other establishment) - Approved Educational Activity.
- E - Excluded (no alternative provision made) - Authorised Absence.
- F - Extended family holiday (agreed) - Authorised Absence.
- I - Illness (not medical/dental appointments) - Authorised Absence.
- J - Interview - Approved Educational Activity.
- L - Late (before registers close) - Present.
- M - Medical/Dental appointments - Authorised Absence.
- N - No reason yet provided for absence - Unauthorised Absence.
- O - Unauthorised Absence.
- P - Approved Sporting Activity - Approved Educational Activity.
- R - Religious Observance - Authorised Absence.
- S - Study Leave - Authorised Absence.
- T - Traveller child travelling - Authorised Absence.
- U - Late after registers close without an acceptable explanation - Unauthorised Absence
- V - Educational visit or trip - Approved Educational Activity.
- W - Work Experience - Approved Educational Activity.
- X - Non-compulsory school age absence - 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 – not counted in possible attendance.

School office staff will follow up on absences and enter the appropriate code on the school electronic system.

Appendix 2 – Roles and responsibilities

All staff - are expected to be excellent role models by having outstanding attendance and punctuality records.

Class Teacher

- Register at 8.45am and 1.00 or 1:30pm as appropriate
- Talk to children and parents of pupils who are persistently late.
- Inform the Assistant Headteacher about pupils causing concern and agree a plan of action.
- Make contact with the families of pupils with poor attendance.

Assistant Headteacher with Responsibility for Attendance

- Monitor that the day-to-day implementation of the Attendance Policy is working.
- Monitor that the school gates are locked promptly.
- Follow up truancy with appropriate sanctions.
- Instigate and follow up meetings with the families of poor attenders (following teacher contact).
- Monitor the process of getting work for excluded, long term absent and adapted timetable pupils.
- Review attendance figures on a half-termly basis.
- Decide upon issues relating to the issue of 'Fixed Penalty Notices'.
- Liaise with the Governing Body and report each term

Office Staff

- Process attendance data and lates / signing in and out information.
- Telephone parents on the first day of absence.
- Monitor missing registers.
- Produce half-termly attendance information for HT and SLT.
- Produce absence letters when requested.
- Complete statistical analysis and data returns for LA, DfE. OfSTED.

SLT

- Set school attendance target
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and reviewed

Governors

- Review Attendance Policy
- Monitor policy implementation
- Target attendance in accordance with the aspirations outlined in this policy.

Appendix 3 - Intervention Strategies

Actions and interventions used to improve attendance

Level 1 90% - 100% attendance (up to 20 days – 4 full weeks absence per year) Key Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accurate marking of attendance registers• Accurate monitoring of absence replies• Liaise with families where concerns exist (<95%) / improvements made• Identify patterns and issues linked to attendance• Issue 'Letter 1'

Level 2 8% - less than 90% attendance (up to 30 days – 6 full weeks absence per year) Key Actions (in addition to previous Levels)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyse patterns and overall attendance• Set targets for improvement (short term). Place on attendance report.• Discussion at LARM meetings• Pupil added to Persistent Absentee register• Conduct parental meeting at parent consultation meetings with an attendance focus• Provide written reports of interventions and impact• Issue 'Letter 2' / Start CAF process.

Level 3 75% - less than 8% attendance (up to 50 days – 10 full weeks absence per year) Key Actions (in addition to previous Levels)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning meetings with family held – Letter 3 issued• Issue Parental agreement or Parent Contract• Referral to EWO with written evidence of previous interventions• CAF implemented for some cases• Timeline of evidence and figures produced for EWO• Use Fixed Penalty Notice for unauthorised absences• No absence authorised without medical evidence

Level 4 60% - less than 75% attendance (up to 80 days – 16 full weeks absence per year) Key Actions (in addition to previous Levels)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Referral to Social Care / Medical provision• Legal documentation produced (EWO)

Level 5 Less than 60% attendance (80 days +/-16 full weeks absence per year) Key Actions (in addition to previous Levels)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EWO referral• Pre- court and Court meetings• Social Care referral

Appendix 4 - Information about Term Time Holidays

The following information has been taken directly from the Cambridgeshire County Council website.

Term time holidays

Children of school age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend that school regularly. Regular attendance is the best way of ensuring that a child makes the most of the educational opportunities which are available to him or her.

When a child is absent from school, he or she misses not only the teaching provided but is also less prepared for the lessons after his or her return.

There are only 190 statutory school days in one year and 175 days (weekends and school holidays) available to use for holidays. Therefore every school day counts!

Key information

Prior to June 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 allowed for headteachers to grant leave of absence for a term time family holiday in 'special circumstances' and for extended leave in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to these regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave. The amendments make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and that headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Your rights and responsibilities

If your child is registered at school you must ensure that he or she attends regularly.

The regulations make it clear that parents, carers or relatives do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term-time holiday.

If parents take their child on holiday in term time this will be counted as unauthorised absence - this is the same as truancy and you may be at risk of a Penalty Notice being applied.

What you can do

Look at the school's attendance policy on the website for full information.

Speak to the school directly if you feel you need to take your child out of school in exceptional circumstances.



St Matthew's Primary School

19 Norfolk Street, Cambridge CB1 2LD

Telephone: 01223 568838

Fax: 01223 568839

Email: office@stmatthews.cambs.sch.uk

Web site: www.stmatthews.cambs.sch.uk

Application for Leave of Absence for a School Pupil in Term-Time in Exceptional Circumstances

Dear Parent/Carer,

The attached form is used to apply for special leave of absence for a child during term time. When making an application it is important to have regard to the following.

It is important to remember that children attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Absence from school leaves children vulnerable to falling behind with their learning.

The Education Regulations 2006, as amended by Education Regulations 2013, no longer permit Headteachers to authorise leave for holidays.

- Headteachers shall not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless they consider there to be exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
- The Headteacher must be satisfied that exceptional circumstances warrant the granting of a leave of absence.
- The Headteacher will determine how long the absence should be and any additional absence will not be authorised.
- Parents whose children have unauthorised absence may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice and /or prosecution.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education through regular attendance at a school or otherwise (e.g. home education). If a child who is of compulsory school age, who is registered at school and fails to attend regularly, it is the parent that will be guilty of an offence (Section 444 (1)).

We have a shared responsibility to ensure that the law is upheld and that your child achieves to his/her full potential.

If you are applying for leave of absence for your child, please have regard to the above and follow the procedure below:

1. The application must be made **in advance** by the parent(s) that the child normally resides with.
2. Please be clear on the form why the application is exceptional. Applications for leave of absence should be:
 - rare,
 - unavoidable (the leave has to happen when it does, it cannot be arranged for the school holidays)
 - short (as little time as possible given the exceptional circumstance).
3. In considering the application, the school will consider the above alongside the child's overall attendance, the frequency of such requests and the impact on the child's attainment, progress and well-being.
4. Please complete a separate Leave of Absence form for each child

Please note that parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecuted for unauthorised absence including holidays.

We look forward to your co-operation. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Annabelle Lewis
Assistant Head Teacher



Application for Leave of Absence for a School Pupil in Term-Time in Exceptional Circumstances

Please complete this form and return to the school office for the attention of Annabelle Lewis, Assistant Head Teacher with responsibility for attendance.

I wish to apply for Leave of Absence from school to be granted to:

Name of Pupil: _____ Class Teacher: _____

Dates of Proposed Absence: From _____ To: _____

Reason for Proposed Absence – please provide reasons to support the application including evidence.

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Total Days Requested On This Occasion ☐

Signature of Parent / Carer: _____ Date: _____

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

Dates checked: Y / N Class Teacher informed: Y / N Current Attendance Rate % : _____

Previous Leave taken: Y / N (dates: _____)

Reason for decision:

.....

1st Date of Absence: _____ Expected date of return to school: _____

Authorised: Y / N Code used: _____

Authorised by: _____ Date: _____