



# SS John Fisher & Thomas More Catholic Primary School

**A Voluntary Academy**

"Journeying together with Jesus Christ, we learn to love and love to learn."



## Attendance Policy

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Policy approved:                   |  |
| Policy review date:                |  |
| Governor committee responsibility: |  |



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## Aims

At Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School, we know that children need a safe, stable and nurturing place to learn. Good attendance is vital for their emotional and academic development.

This policy outlines the ways in which we will work with children and parents/carers to encourage our pupils to attend school every day.

We recognise that an ethos of good attendance can only be achieved through a whole school approach, supported by our attendance team; regular monitoring; safeguarding and behaviour policies; and teacher interventions.

Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School values all pupils and strives to:

- Promote good attendance
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Build strong relationships with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties that prevent a pupil from attending school
- Promote and support punctuality

## Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' guidance 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:

- The Education Act 1996 states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Under the same Act, 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.
- 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.
- If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at that school, then the parent is guilty of an offence contrary to Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enable Local Authorities to issue penalty notices for certain offences. These notices can be used as an alternative to prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty. Penalty notices are fines of £120 per parent, per child, reduced to £60 if paid within the initial 21-day period.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016 amendments) require schools to take an attendance register twice a

day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

- The register must record whether the pupil was:
  - present;
  - absent;
  - present at approved educational activity; or
  - unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

### **Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies:

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **The Governing Body**

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Reviewing the school's Attendance Policy annually, and ensuring resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data through termly reporting at Governing Body meetings
- Ensuring that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensuring there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensuring the school has clear systems of reporting, recording and monitoring the attendance of **all** pupils, including those educated off-site
- Setting school attendance target for submission to the Local Authority each year
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **The Senior Leadership Team**

The SLT is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School
- Actively promoting the importance of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers
- Forming positive relationships with pupils and their parents/carers
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data and monitoring their impact

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is the Headteacher, Dominic Hemington and can be contacted at [head@st-johnfisher-st-thomasmore.manchester.sch.uk](mailto:head@st-johnfisher-st-thomasmore.manchester.sch.uk)

### **Attendance Team/ School Office Staff**

The attendance team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers
- Work to form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Ensure the registers are completed on time
- Ensure the reasons for any absences are recorded, with parents/carers contacted if necessary
- Make home visits when deemed necessary to ascertain the child's wellbeing
- Monitor attendance and punctuality every three weeks, and complete the actions agreed
  - these can include letters, FPN warnings, invitations to an attendance panel and PA action groups.

### **Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day on time.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, medical and dental appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Talk to their child about school and take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable in exceptional circumstances, send a written leave request to the Headteacher.

### **Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Speak to their teacher at several intervals throughout the academic year about the importance of attendance on their learning.

## **Recording Attendance**

### **Attendance register**

At Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School, we will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. (See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.) We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and at the start of 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

Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School 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.

## Categorising Absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher or attendance team and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents must advise the school by telephone before 9.00am on the first day of absence and every day of absence thereafter. If possible, parents/carers must provide the school with an expected date of return.

Authorised absences will be categorised as follows:

**Illness** - We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, hospital letter or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

**Medical/Dental Appointments** - Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if evidence is provided and as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment and with a minimum of 24 hours'

notice. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

**Other Authorised Circumstances** - This relates to where there is cause for absence due to **serious exceptional circumstances**. Parents/carers who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the Headteacher in advance on the requested leave. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary is unable to authorise holidays during school time in line with national regulations. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for a leave of absence. The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be **serious exceptional circumstances**. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion and will include the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School understands that holidays can be less expensive during term time but this does **NOT** count as a **serious exceptional circumstance**. Leave which is taken for the following reasons will not be considered as serious exceptional circumstances and will therefore be unauthorised absences:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a wedding that is not immediate family (immediate family defined as mother, father or older sibling)
- Family birthdays or other family occasions

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent/carer takes their child out of school regardless, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school will request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice fine to each parent/carer per child absent from school, upon their return to school/ The Local Authority may also consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the Magistrates' Court or the application of an Education Supervision Order within the Family Court.

**Excluded** (No alternative provision made) - exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

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

If a pupil fails to return to school after an unauthorised absence and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends. Where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong, an absence, if

requested in advance and in writing, will be authorised. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. A maximum of 2 days of religious observance will be authorised across one academic year.

**Traveller Absence** - it is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, is 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 (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil 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 pupil's school place at Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance. Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School 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

Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes 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.

### **Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil who is expected 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 carry out a home visit.

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.

### Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels if their absence is below national averages through letters and they may be invited to an Attendance Panel.

### Lateness and Punctuality

The school day begins at 8:50am. Children arriving after this time are late.

If your child arrives after 8:50am they must enter with their parent/carer via the school office and signed in. The reason for lateness must be recorded. Your child will receive a late mark in the register. If they arrive after 9:30am this will then be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Persistent lateness impacts adversely upon the children's own and others' learning and it will be dealt with through the class teacher and senior leadership team. Punctuality will be monitored. If lateness is persistent there will be further communication from the school to provide additional support with the view to improving punctuality. If there is no improvement or acceptable reason for the persistent lateness school can request a penalty notice to be issued to the parents/carers.

### Legal Sanctions

When school receives a request for a term time absence, and if this request is refused, parents/carers will receive a response from the Headteacher informing you that the **leave of absence request cannot be authorised** and that a penalty notice fine will be issued to each parent/carer should they proceed with the intended absence from school, upon their child's return to school, if the leave of absence is **5 days or more**.

Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School will instruct the Local Authority to fine each parent/carer, per child, for the **unauthorised absence** of their child from school where the child is of compulsory age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carer must pay a fine £60 if paid within 21 days of issue or £120 if within 28 days of issue. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority.

If we feel there are exceptional circumstances and evidence has been provided, the absence may be authorised for some or all of the days requested e.g., the day of a funeral may be authorised but not a two-week absence etc. If we receive no evidence, this request will be treated as an unauthorised holiday and a penalty notice will be issued upon the child's return.



Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, Local Authority school attendance 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

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute the parents/carers or withdraw the notice.

## **Monitoring Attendance and using Attendance Data**

The headteacher and attendance team will monitor attendance and punctuality data every three weeks.

This pupil data will be used to trigger school action as set out in our monitoring procedures, including sending letters or invitations to an attendance panel.

### **Analysing attendance**

The headteacher 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

Attendance will be reported to and monitored by the local governing body

### **Using data to improve attendance**

Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, 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

### **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 Attendance Panels with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) consider to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school

Provide access to wider support services to remove any barriers to attendance

Send letters to parents informing them if their child's attendance has dropped below 90%

## **Strategies and support systems for promoting attendance**

At Ss John Fisher & Thomas More Primary School, we recognise that attendance can sometimes be affected by problems at home and/or in school. We ask parents to make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, incidents of domestic abuse or any medical issues.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

We want to support parents/carers in achieving excellent attendance and we will endeavour to support by;

- creating a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- giving a high priority to punctuality and attendance
- celebrating 100% attendance weekly with a 'wheel of names' competition
- celebrating 100% attendance termly, with bronze, silver and gold badges
- half-termly reward for over 97% attendance and good punctuality
- building strong relationships with families through regular contact where attendance is a concern, including panels.
- communicating our high expectations to pupils and parents/carers
- targeted groups for persistently absent children
- offer referrals to Early Help
- offer referrals to support agencies

|   | 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                                         |

### Appendix 1: Attendance codes

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

| Code                      | Definition                  | Scenario                                                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Authorised absence</b> |                             |                                                                            |
| 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   |

|                             |                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>I</b>                    | Illness                           | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness                                                                                                                               |
| <b>M</b>                    | Medical/dental appointment        | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>R</b>                    | Religious observance              | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>S</b>                    | Study leave                       | Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>T</b>                    | Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence | Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Unauthorised absence</b> |                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>G</b>                    | Unauthorised holiday              | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>N</b>                    | 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) |
| <b>O</b>                    | Unauthorised absence              | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>U</b>                    | Arrival after registration        | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed                                                                                                                                                 |

| Code     | Definition                                        | Scenario                                                                                                               |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>X</b> | Not required to be in school                      | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend                                                           |
| <b>Y</b> | 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 |
| <b>Z</b> | Pupil not on admission register                   | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school                                                                |
| <b>#</b> | Planned school closure                            | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day                                                |

## Appendix 2: Attendance data colour code banding and attendance escalation interventions

### GREEN pupils with attendance between 100% to 97%

Pupils will be rewarded every half term.

The attendance team will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

### YELLOW pupils with attendance between 97% and 94%

Class teacher will speak welcome the pupil back to school after any absence.

- Update the pupil on other work they have missed and support any catch up required

In addition, where unauthorised absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review with the pupil, a letter may be sent to parents advising of concern and outlining the parents' responsibilities.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

### AMBER pupils with attendance between 94% and 90%

- Pupils with attendance within the Amber range will be identified in attendance monitoring meetings, where the reasons for their absence will be discussed.
- A plan for interventions will be implemented which could include a letter of concern, an invitation to an attendance panel to discuss support, group work with children of similar attendance, fixed penalty notice warning.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of Interventions and escalate if necessary.

### RED pupils with attendance below 90%

Pupils who have attendance below 90% are considered to be persistently absent from school. To ensure that intervention is focused and meets the needs of individuals the Attendance Team will

- Ensure that the pupil and/or parent/carers has already been contacted by a member of staff at the stages preceding RED intervention (AMBER intervention will occur in cases where the pupil has immediately fallen from GREEN into RED)
- Obtain records of previous contact and interventions as set out in AMBER and escalate accordingly
- Ensure that weekly contact occurs with the pupil either individually or within a small group to address themed issues
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil that will see the pupil move to the band above.
- Review existing plans and co-ordinate school resources to support the pupil's attendance and any additional needs
- Be the key contact person for any external agency working with the pupil