



ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY 2026-2027

That all may have life - life in all its fullness

Our Mission Statement

The aim of our school is excellence in education in accordance with the teachings of the church.

We recognise that everyone is unique and has something to offer and we seek to develop each child's potential in a learning community where all are respected. We want every child to achieve and experience success.

Working in partnership with children, their parents, our parish and the wider community, we promote Christ's teaching as found in the Gospel so that 'all may have life, life in all its fullness'.

We aim to ensure this is done by;

- Praying together
- Living and working together as a loving, caring and forgiving community
- Valuing the experience and diversity of every person in our community
- Encouraging the children to achieve of their best – mentally, emotionally and spiritually
- Helping all in our community to experience the joy of learning and working together

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is extremely important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. St. Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

St. Margaret Clitherow's aim to achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.

Children who are persistently late or absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. Poor attendance can affect a child's ability to form relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships. A child whose attendance drops below 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school regularly;
- arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day ahead;
- tell a member of staff about any problem which is making it hard for them to attend school regularly.

We expect that all parents will:

- telephone the school by 9.00am on the 1st day that their child is too ill to attend school, giving specific reasons. Sick or unwell is not sufficient and then follow up with a letter upon their child's return. Without evidence, the absence will be unauthorised.
- wherever possible make any dentist/doctor/hospital appointments as necessary – outside of school hours or earliest after 2.00pm. Should this not be possible and the appointment is in the morning then parents will bring their child in after the appointments even if it's mid-day or later.
- not keep their child away from school if there is an issue in school; contact the school to discuss the problem with a senior member of staff.
- not to keep their child away from school for unnecessary reasons, i.e birthdays, holidays, relatives, visits, shopping trips, your own ill health etc
- encourage their children to attend school every day and on time;
- ensure that their children arrive in school fully prepared for the school day;
- provide the school with up to date home, work and emergency numbers;
- not arrange family holidays to take place during the school term;
- inform the school in confidence about any problem which might affect their child's attendance;
- respond promptly to requests for meetings about their child's attendance.

Parents can expect that the school will:

- provide a good quality education;
- record their child's attendance regularly, efficiently and accurately;
- make all efforts to encourage good attendance and punctuality through various rewards;
- follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school;
- communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils;
- refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve;
- report attendance statistics to Greenwich LA and the DfE where requested;
- create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school;
- ensure that our policy applies to EYFS aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age;
- support pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance;
- equip children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- It is the legal obligation of parents / carers to report why their children are absent from school. This information can be relayed in writing or verbally (not via children).
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority.
- Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.
- Medical evidence enables schools to authorise absences due to illness, appropriately. It also allows the school to consider suitable support to be put in place for their child during or after the absence. For example, acceptable forms of medical evidence: a copy of the doctor's / hospital letter, evidence of calls, text messages to the doctor or hospital, a copy of the prescription for medicine or the prescribed medicine package must be supplied to the school.
- We urge parents wherever possible to make medical appointments outside of the school day.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.
- Reasons for absence which are not acceptable include: term time holidays, waking up late, a shopping trip, looking after younger siblings, time off for birthdays etc.

Unauthorised Holidays

- Family holidays during term time will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents are asked for their cooperation by not taking family holidays during school time.
- An application for extended leave must be made by filling out the appropriate form, available from the office.
- It is at the Headteacher's discretion whether this request will be given and account will be taken of previous requests and pupils' overall attendance.
- If this request is not granted yet the time off is still taken, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer where a penalty fine may be sought.

Lateness – L/U

- The start of the school day is 8.4am. Pupils arriving after this time need to be signed in late (L) by a member of staff at the school office.
- The registers close at 8.50am and 13.10pm; pupils arriving after these times will be marked as "Late after close of register" (U) which counts as absent.
- Pupils with more than 6 late marks in the register will be contacted by the school. If further monitoring highlights no improvement, a second letter will be sent out and a formal meeting arranged with the Headteacher.

Punctuality

3 late arrivals within a two-week period – informal reminder

6 late arrivals within a half term – formal letter home

10 or more late arrivals within a half term – meeting with parent/carers

Continued lateness – referral to the attendance officer may be considered.

Procedures

St. Margaret Clitherow will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- The school has a policy of first day absence calling in accordance with our safeguarding procedures. On the first day that a child is absent it is expected that the school will receive notification from a parent / carer by 9.00am. If this is not received the school will call to determine the reason for the child's absence.
- For those pupils whose attendance falls below 95% or who are late more than 6 times, a first warning letter will be sent to parents to ask for cooperation in raising their child's attendance rate.
- If the situation does not show signs of improvement, a second warning letter will be sent home asking that the parent comes in to discuss the matter with the
- Headteacher. If necessary, support from the school will be put in place.
- For children who are persistently absent, attendance panel meetings are called. These will be attended by the Headteacher and any other relevant stakeholders. The matter is referred to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) if necessary and parents will be informed.

Penalty Notices

- The law gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/ carer is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's school attendance is met. Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others.
- Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days.
- Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted. Penalty notices are issued per parent per child at £120. However, if paid within 21 days the cost is £60.
- In cases of unauthorised absence parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of Penalty Notice being issued.