



Archdiocese of
Birmingham

St Thomas More Catholic Academy

S⁺ Thomas More
Catholic Academy
FAITH | EXCELLENCE | RESPECT

Attendance Policy

Date of Policy:	February 2019
Member of Staff Responsible:	Mrs J Stubbs
SLT: Principal:	Mr M Rayner
Chair of the Academy Representatives: Nominated Academy Representative:	Mr R Fello
Date of Policy Review:	February 2021
<i>Publish:</i>	<i>Website</i>



All Saints Catholic Collegiate

UNITED IN
FAITH, LOVE & LEARNING

In accordance with our Mission statement, at St Thomas More we strive to secure a shared vision for all associated with our school community. Fundamentally, we "Aspire to be More" by maintaining a safe, happy and caring environment which encompasses our school values of Faith, Excellence, Respect.

St Thomas More Catholic Academy Mission Statement is:

Christ is at the heart of our community, where everyone is known and loved.

In fulfilling our mission we are a school of prayer. We live as a community of love, peace and reconciliation, valuing everyone's dignity as a child of God to promote and celebrate the growth and achievement of the whole person.

AIMS

St Thomas More is committed to developing and maintaining an effective whole school strategy with regards to attendance and punctuality. The DfE School Attendance guidelines state that *“Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.”* St Thomas More is committed to supporting the excellent attendance of all students.

The school aims to:

- Maintain a high level of attendance.
- Reduce to a minimum the number of authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Reduce to a minimum the number of students who are persistently absent.
- Ensure attendance procedures are effectively and consistently applied.
- Ensure safeguarding procedures are effectively and consistently applied.

St Thomas More works in partnership with parents/carers in promoting and encouraging 100 percent attendance and punctuality for all our students. We ensure that staff receive professional development to maintain knowledge of registration, attendance and punctuality procedures as well as school attendance and punctuality levels.

Good attendance is essential to success in school:

90% attendance = ½ day missed every week

1 school year at 90% attendance = 4 whole weeks of lessons missed.

90% attendance over 5 years of secondary school = ½ a school year missed.

It is suggested that 17 missed school days a year = one GCSE grade drop in achievement. This can be applied to GCSE, AS and A Level.

Attendance	95%	90%	85%	80%
Numbers of days of lost learning	9.5	19	28.5	38
Number of lessons lost	47.5	95	142.5	190
Number of lessons lost for a six day period	57	114	171	228

Is 95 % attendance good? This means pupils will have missed 10 school days in a year. Over 5 years this means 50 days, which is almost a full school term.

Holidays in Term Time

Following the City Council's new Code of Conduct any unauthorised term time holiday could lead to a fine from the LA. The head teacher has absolute discretion regarding whether or not a child's absence from school is to be permitted during term time and if so, the period of absence to be permitted.

Please note, persistent pupil absence may be classed as a legal offence and could result in legal proceedings.

Religious Festivals

As a Catholic school we acknowledge requests for the celebration of the religious festival of Eid.

In accordance with local authority guidance, the school may approve absence for the following days.

1 day for Little Eid.

2 days for Big Eid.

Such absences will affect your child's attendance record

No further days will be approved and will be recorded as unauthorised

Amendments to the 2006 regulations from the Department for Education (which come into effect from September 2013) remove references to family holidays and extended leave. "Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances".

Please note "exceptional circumstances" do NOT include a situation where parents choose to take pupils out of school to fit in with their work related holiday dates. Missing school for a family holiday will have huge impact on your child's learning. Students who miss two weeks of school will miss 50 periods of learning and will never be able to make up that time. Please refer to the DfE "Amendments to School Attendance Regulations" for further details. If you believe that your circumstances meet the exceptional criteria, please put your request in writing using the "Application For Leave Of Absence In Exceptional Circumstances During Term Time" form. Forms are available at the school Reception or on the website (www.stmca.org.uk) Applications should be addressed to the Headteacher and must be submitted at least four weeks in advance of the date. Parents who take pupils on an unauthorised holiday in term time / do not provide a valid reason for absence will be issued with a Penalty Warning Letter and, if applicable, a fixed penalty notice (fine) by the Local Authority. (see Appendix 1)

If a student does not attend school for a period of 20 consecutive days or more, and no reason is provided, or a holiday / leave is taken during term time, your child risks being taken off roll and therefore losing their place at St Thomas More Catholic Academy.

First Day absence

Each morning any pupils absent will receive an email or phone call requesting parents/carers to provide a reason for the absence to the school's Attendance Officer.

There is a facility for parents to be able to leave a message stating their son/daughter's reason for absence on the school's designated attendance phone number: 01782 882908.

Other Absences

If any absence, whether covered by a note or not, is considered as an unauthorised absence by a member of staff, the HOY will be informed by the Attendance Officer. Parents will also be informed by a Head of Year or Student Support of our concern.

In any case of suspected truancy, parents will be informed of the school's concern at the earliest possible opportunity.

In cases of truancy or when serious concern about absence arises within school, the Education Welfare Service will be contacted by the school. This facility is also available for parents to use themselves.

Wherever possible, medical appointments should be made outside school hours or in school holidays. Where this is not possible, pupils should ensure they are only absent for part of the day i.e. if the appointment is in the morning, they should attend school in the afternoon and vice versa.

St Thomas More Catholic Academy works in accordance within the guidance of the Stoke On Trent Code Of Conduct. The Government has made it clear that it expects Local Authorities to have a Code of Conduct in place so that the full range of measures for improving attendance are available to schools. Regular school attendance is both a legal requirement and essential if the children of Stoke-on-Trent are to achieve better outcomes in education and maximise the opportunities available to them. Stoke-on-Trent Schools consistently work towards a goal of 100 per cent attendance for all children in school.

Therefore, in order to support the full attendance of students, please be advised that the following circumstances may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice (fine):

- a. Where one or both parents persistently fails to ensure their child of compulsory school age attends the school in which they are registered as a pupil or attends at another place of learning and attendance is below 90 per cent in a school term i.e. 12 or more sessions of absence in a 12 week period, and;
- b. Any absence by the child which is not due to the instances stated in the Education Act 1996, namely:-
 - Sickness or unavoidable cause [Section 444(2A)]
 - With leave ie. Authorised absence [Section 444(3)(a)]
 - For religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs [Section 444(3)(c)]
 - The Local Authority has a duty to make travel arrangements to facilitate the child's attendance at the school and has failed to discharge that duty [Section 444(3B)]; and
- c. Where the school can show evidence to the Local Authority that they have attempted all of the following:-
 - i. Contact by telephone;
 - ii. Contact by letter;
 - iii. Invitation to a formal meeting
- d. Term time leave is taken without obtaining the prior written agreement of the head teacher or an authorised deputy or assistant head teacher and the parents have been warned that a Penalty Notice may result.
- e. Unwarranted delayed return from term time leave without the prior written agreement of the head teacher or an authorised deputy or assistant head teacher
- f. Persistent late arrival of a child after the school register has been closed (Attendance Code U only) being 12 unauthorised late marks in the register within a 12 week period.

- g. A parent's failure to make arrangements to ensure that a child who has been excluded from school on disciplinary grounds is not in a public place at any time during school hours on a day which is during the first five school days of any exclusion, without reasonable justification. [Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006].

It is incumbent upon the parent in such circumstances to provide proof of reasonable justification, for example, that the child or young person needed to attend a pre-arranged medical appointment, or a medical emergency requiring the child to be supervised elsewhere other than at home.

In light of the above, a letter containing a Penalty Notice warning may be sent out by the head teacher or an authorised deputy or assistant head teacher on Stoke-on-Trent City Council letter-headed paper, signed by a head teacher or an authorised deputy or assistant head teacher and counter-signed by either:

- i. Education Welfare Team Manager; or
- ii. Education Welfare Officer for the school (where appropriate)

GUIDELINES

The school will:

- Accurately record the attendance of all students using Sims during morning registration and at the beginning of every lesson.
- Make first day contact to the parent/carer of all students (vulnerable/PA students will be prioritised) and take action on problems/issues notified to us.
- Arrange to meet with parents/carers if it is appropriate or necessary to do so.
- Ensure attendance is monitored for students attending offsite provision.
- Promote strategies for maintaining good attendance.
- Evaluate attendance patterns for different groups of learners and respond appropriately.
- Ensure that all staff understand their role in ensuring good attendance and punctuality for a successful education
- Ensure that students with poor attendance and/or punctuality are challenged and students with good attendance and/or punctuality are rewarded.
- Ensure that regular liaison takes place between the Head of Year, Attendance Officer, Education Welfare Officers and Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for Pastoral care regarding attendance and punctuality
- Set targets for whole school and individual attendance and punctuality.
- Where appropriate, ensure that effective reintegration programmes are implemented following a sustained period of absence from school due to illness or injury, alternative education off site or fixed term exclusion

Parents/Carers will:

- Contact the school on their child's first day of absence
- Encourage their children to arrive on time (no later than 9am) and attend regularly.
- Inform the school of any issues that may affect their child's attendance.
- Contact offsite providers on their child's first day of absence.

Students will:

- Attend regularly.
- Arrive on time.
- Inform staff of any reason that may affect their attendance.
- Produce an absence note on their return to school.

Attendance procedures

On the first day of absence, parents/carers have a responsibility to inform the school of their child's absence by contacting the school. When the student returns to school after absence parents/carers must provide a signed, written reason for their child's absence either in the student planner or as a separate letter.

If an acceptable reason for absence is given and accepted by the school the absence may be marked as 'authorised'. The school are under no obligation to accept the reason given for absence when there is doubt of its validity.

Where appropriate, students regularly identifying poor health as a reason for absence will be asked to produce a medical certificate from their GP.

No student in year 7-11 is permitted to leave the school site during the school day, including break times and lunch times, without prior permission.

The Attendance Officer and Head of Year will review and monitor all students whose attendance falls below 95%. (Government guidelines declare any child with attendance of 90% or below as persistently absent.) Students whose attendance falls below 95% will be spoken to in the first instance by their form tutor, followed by a letter of concern sent by the HOY/HOKS should the concern continue.

If absence persists without response, improvement or if there are other issues with persistent patterns of poor attendance (e.g. attendance percentage is below 90%) a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer. The EWO will contact the parents/carers directly making them aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance and that penalty notices may be issued and / or court proceedings pursued. Attendance at compulsory parent/student meetings will be expected.

If absence deteriorates to 90% in respect of any student, this will be reviewed along with the EWO who will advise as to whether the school should continue to authorise the absence. Contact will be made with parents/carers. The Attendance Officer, HOY and AH will be involved at this stage, if not before.

If after a period of 5 school days, continuous absence with no reason and no contact from parents/carers, the EWO will be informed and an informal visit may take place. Further advice may be sought from EWS, CYPS and/or police in order to ensure that students are safeguarded. This will be recorded as code O 'unauthorised absence' in the school register and a Penalty Notice Warning Letter may be issued on the sixth day of unauthorised absence.

If a student does not attend school for a period of 20 consecutive days or more, and no reason is provided, or a holiday / leave is taken during term time, your child risks being taken off roll and therefore losing their place at St Thomas More Catholic Academy.

Punctuality Procedures

Students should arrive to school by 9am, ready to start morning registration at 9:05 am.

If a student is going to be late to school parents/carers have a responsibility to inform the school of their child's lateness by telephone.

Persistent issues with poor punctuality (arriving after the register has closed) will be referred to the EWO. The EWO will contact the parents/carers directly making them aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance and that penalty notices may be issued and / or court proceedings pursued. Meetings with parents will be expected.

PROCEDURES

Attendance Officer:

The Attendance Officer will make first day contact with the parent/carer of absent students. They will alert the Head of Year, EWO and/or Assistant Headteacher to sudden/gradual changes in attendance that cannot be accounted for.

Form Tutors:

Form tutors will record accurately the attendance/absence of students in their form and alert the Student Support, Head of Year and/or Attendance Officer of any attendance issues. Form Tutors will monitor the attendance of their form, will set individual attendance targets and ensure that they are recorded in the Student Planner. Form Tutors will follow the guidelines for the safeguarding of students as displayed in all registers, and will support in securing full attendance through regular dialogue with parents/carers and students.

Subject Teachers:

Subject Teachers will register their teaching groups at the beginning of every lesson and alert the Attendance Officer to any unexplained absence. The Attendance Officer will follow up concerns and alert parents/carers as appropriate.

Head of Year:

Heads of Year will monitor the attendance of students in their year group and alert the Attendance Officer/EWO/Assistant Headteacher of any concerns. They will inform parents/carers by standard letter if their attendance continues to fall below the school attendance target of 96%. Where appropriate, parents will be invited to attend a meeting/Attendance Clinic. Heads of Year will regularly meet with the EWO to discuss issues arising. Heads of Year will also oversee the distribution of attendance certificates each half term and praise postcards as appropriate.

SLT with responsibility for attendance:

The Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for attendance will meet weekly with the EWO, relevant Assistant Headteachers and Attendance Officer to discuss issues arising and agree priorities. In consultation with EWO and Heads of Year, attendance clinics will be arranged for targeted students and phased return to school for relevant students with prolonged absence will be arranged.

Education Welfare officer:

The EWO will liaise with key staff and offer guidance and support as appropriate. They will lead action on students who are 'Persistently Absent' and/or whose attendance falls below 90%. With the Academy, the EWO will arrange/attend attendance clinics for targeted students. They will advise/support the Attendance Officer with data returns to the LA/DfE and will meet regularly with the Heads of Year / Assistant Headteacher to discuss issues arising (including safeguarding).

Working Together

Students are actively involved in achieving the highest attendance figures for themselves and their community and we encourage parents/carers to support us in driving up the attendance figures of our school. We hope and expect that all parents will encourage their child to attend regularly and punctually. We believe this is not just important from an academic point of view but also in creating responsible citizens.

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES DURING TERM TIME

As a school we actively discourage parents from taking their children out of school during term time as absences can have a negative effect on progress.

Students do not have any entitlement to time off during term time for holidays. **In line with DFE guidelines, the school will only authorise requests for leave during term time if it is felt that there are exceptional circumstances.** Any other leave which is taken but not authorised by the school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence on a child's attendance record.

It is a legal requirement for parents/carers to obtain permission from the school before removing their child to take any leave during term time. **Parents may be issued with a Penalty Notice (fine) if they take their children out of school for leave without prior authorisation.** You can check the school term dates on our website (www.stmca.org.uk) to ensure you avoid booking holidays during term time.

If you wish to request a leave of absence for your child you must complete the attached form. The form can also be downloaded from the school website. This form should be filled in and returned with a letter explaining why you need to take your child out of school. It should be returned to the Attendance Officer (Mrs Perry) at least 4 WEEKS before the first planned day of absence, where possible. The form will be given to the Headteacher, Mr Rayner. Requests will only be authorised where it is deemed there are exceptional circumstances. Evidence must be provided to demonstrate that this is an exceptional circumstance and all available evidence should be submitted at this point. If your request is rejected and your child is absent on the day(s) stated, this will be marked as an unauthorised absence and the following actions may be taken:

- A meeting will be held in school, at the request of the EWO, to discuss the consequences of taking unauthorised leave / holiday during term time.
- A statutory referral may be made to EWS
- A possible Penalty Notice Warning Letter and/or Penalty Warning (fine) may be issued from the sixth day of any unauthorised absence.
- More than 20 days of consecutive absence can result in your child being taken off roll and losing their place at St Thomas More Catholic Academy.

We would like to remind parents and students of the importance of good attendance and its link to attainment. Attendance plays a vital role in student success. Government statistics show that a total absence of three weeks over the course of one year reduces your chances of achieving target grades by 20%. A total absence of five weeks reduces the chance of achieving target grades by a third! We would urge parents to think carefully about the impact extended absences can have on student progress and attainment. In the event that a period of absence is authorised for your child, they will be expected to catch up on any work they have missed.

St Thomas More Catholic Academy: Request For Leave Of Absence During Term Time

I wish to apply for leave of absence from school for my child:

Name of child.....Class.....

First day of leave requested.....Last day.....

Number of school days involved

Exceptional circumstances leading to request.

.....

Signed.....parent/guardian Date.....

Name of person completing the form:(please print)

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE MAIN OFFICE FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE
ATTENDANCE OFFICER.**

For School use only:

The above leave is authorised/not authorised (delete as applicable) in accordance with the school's procedures.

Name of child Form.....

Current attendance%

Signed..... (Headteacher on behalf of Chair of
Governors)

Date.....

Stoke On Trent Code Of Conduct: **Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice warning can be issued**

Regulation 15 of The Education (Penalty Notices)(England) Regulations 2007 states that in preparing the Code of Conduct the Local Education Authority must consult with governing bodies, head teachers and the Chief Officer for the Police in the area of the Local Education Authority.

Following consultation with the said consultees it has been decided that the following circumstances may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice:

- h. Where one or both parents persistently fails to ensure their child of compulsory school age attends the school in which they are registered as a pupil or attends at another place of learning and attendance is below 90 per cent in a school term i.e. 12 or more sessions of absence in a 12 week period, and;
- i. Any absence by the child which is not due to the instances stated in the Education Act 1996, namely:-
 - Sickness or unavoidable cause [Section 444(2A)]
 - With leave ie. Authorised absence [Section 444(3)(a)]
 - For religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs [Section 444(3)(c)]
 - The Local Authority has a duty to make travel arrangements to facilitate the child's attendance at the school and has failed to discharge that duty [Section 444(3B)]; and
- j. Where the school can show evidence to the Local Authority that they have attempted all of the following:-
 - iv. Contact by telephone;
 - v. Contact by letter;
 - vi. Invitation to a formal meeting
- k. Term time leave is taken without obtaining the prior written agreement of the head teacher or an authorised deputy or assistant head teacher and the parents have been warned that a Penalty Notice may result.
- l. Unwarranted delayed return from term time leave without the prior written agreement of the head teacher or an authorised deputy or assistant head teacher
- m. Persistent late arrival of a child after the school register has been closed (Attendance Code U only) being 12 unauthorised late marks in the register within a 12 week period.
- n. A parent's failure to make arrangements to ensure that a child who has been excluded from school on disciplinary grounds is not in a public place at any time during school hours on a day which is during the first five school days of any exclusion, without reasonable justification. [Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006].

It is incumbent upon the parent in such circumstances to provide proof of reasonable justification, for example, that the child or young person needed to attend a pre-arranged medical appointment, or a medical emergency requiring the child to be supervised elsewhere other than at home.

In light of the above, a letter containing a Penalty Notice warning may be sent out by the head teacher or an authorised deputy or assistant head teacher on Stoke-on-Trent City Council letter-headed paper, signed by a head teacher or an authorised deputy or assistant head teacher and counter-signed by either:

- iii. Education Welfare Team Manager; or
- iv. Education Welfare Officer for the school (where appropriate)