



St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Multi Academy Trust Attendance Policy 2017

Ethos and Mission Statement

The Mission of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Multi Academy Trust:

We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment where every child is encouraged to reach their full potential with regard to their spiritual, moral, social, cultural, academic and personal qualities.

Our aim is that all children will grow in self-confidence, become responsible and caring members of society and develop a life-long love of learning.

We aim to instil 'British Values' by making decisions together, developing an understanding that rules matter, ensuring individual liberty, and promoting mutual respect and tolerance.

We intend that our delivery of the curriculum reflects these aims, through continuous evaluation of all that is done in school.

The mission requires equality of opportunity and the co-operation of all stake holders in the Catholic Multi Academy Trust to foster a Christian atmosphere and an inclusive Catholic Community.

To achieve these aims we endeavour to:

Pray with and for each other.

Learn together by sharing the best of ourselves.

Show consideration and care for others.

Treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves.

Support each other in our journey of Faith.

Statement of Intent

The Education Act of 1996 states that suitable education for a child's age, aptitude and ability must be provided and that the parent of a child of compulsory age, registered at a school and failing to attend regularly, is guilty of an offence punishable by law. Education regulations of 2013 state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Therefore, registered pupils of compulsory age are required by law to be in school. Parents should endeavour to do all they can to ensure their child attends school for the 190 school days of the school year.

School has a duty of care to know the whereabouts of every child for the 190 days they are expected to attend school.

We regard regular school attendance as a vital prerequisite not only to every child's education but also to developing life long good habits. Children quickly pick up the message that their presence is important so the twice-daily requirement to register pupils is an opportunity to achieve this. It is also an opportunity for the school to receive children formally from home, and serve as an introduction to the session. Where there are problems with a pupil's attendance the school will work with the parents in line with the Catholic ethos of the school and endeavour to resolve the issue. Attendance is closely monitored and we offer support and helpful advice, as can the Local Authority. (At St John's this is offered through Educational Welfare Services)

Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a justifiable reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (Where the school approves pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (Where the school will not approve absence)

If a child is absent, parents must call the school on each day of the absence stating a reason. The call must be made by 10.00 am. The school will then decide whether to authorise the absence/s. If authorisation were to be refused, for instance if a child was kept off school for a birthday, then the parents would be informed.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents.

If contact, explaining the child's absence, fails to be made by parents or carers, then the school would contact the home via a telephone call or by using a text messaging service on the first day by 10am, which will be carried out by the School Administrator. If, however, the absence continues, it will be followed up by school's Attendance Officer. Where concerns continue and/or a pupil has had 10 consecutive days or more of unauthorised absence and no contact is made, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team under Children

Missing Education/attendance procedures. Where it is suspected that a pupil may be at risk of Female Genital Mutation (FGM), sexual exploitation, radicalisation, or is a runaway or young carer, safeguarding procedures will be followed.

Local authority attendance procedures will be followed in relation to school transfers, exclusions and pupils who are dual registered and attending alternative provision.

Notes will be taken during meetings or from telephone messages and any verbal explanations. These will all be dated.

All the schools within the St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Multi Academy Trust use a range of positive initiatives and rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality by all pupils.

Completing the Register

The school uses an electronic registering system. Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable for several reasons. Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are documents **that may be required in a court of law**, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They may also contribute to pupil's end of term reports and to records of achievement. For these reasons registers are required to be completed accurately using the set symbols.

A copy of the register will be printed and kept in the office in case of a fire evacuation or other emergency evacuation purpose.

Therefore completion of registers is also crucial for the Health and Safety of Children, as they are used during these procedures. Where a pupil is present for registration, but then has to attend an appointment, parents must sign their child out in the appropriate file at the school office, similarly pupils returning from appointments must be signed in. This is for emergency evacuation procedures.

Leave of absence during Term Time

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which we, and you, must seek to avoid.

The Department for Education have made amendments to regulations with regard to school attendance.

From 1st September 2013, under new regulations, schools are **no longer allowed to authorise leave of absence for family holidays.**

Clarification of this may be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a00223868/regulations-amendments>

Forms requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances are available from the school office. Any parent submitting a request will be required to provide evidence of the exceptional circumstance under which the request is being submitted. This evidence must be submitted at the time of the form and must give external validation of the exceptional circumstance if it is due to parent's work commitments. Where no evidence is provided, parents will be invited to attend a meeting with the school attendance officer to discuss the request.

Submission of the form does not guarantee authorisation.

Forms must be submitted, with evidence, at least 4 weeks before the requested absence. Should school not receive a request form and a child be absent without explanation, CME procedures will be followed.

A response to an application for absence will be made within 10 working days. The Directors have agreed to use Penalty Notices if parents take their children out for term-time holiday when the school has not authorised the absence. Currently the amounts are £60 per child for each parent where the fine is paid within 21 days; £120 per child for each parent where the fine is paid between the 21st and 28th day. Parents should be aware that this means a family of 2 parents and 2 children will be fined £240, if the fine is paid within 21 days or £480 if the fine is paid from 21-28 days. For families with 3 children, these amounts would be £360/£720. (Please refer to Stockton Local Authority's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct and Procedures for Attendance and Exclusion.)

Even in exceptional circumstances, the school will not authorise term-time holiday for children whose attendance over the previous year has caused concern (below 95%) or whose attendance for the year in which absence is being sought is of concern.

If leave of absence is denied and a subsequent medical notification given for the same period requested, medical evidence will be required to support the absence.

Parents/ Carers are also requested to make any medical appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. If appointments are allocated during school hours, evidence should be provided - this could include an appointment card or letter from the hospital.

Where children are absent beyond 3 days for medical reasons, parents should provide appropriate evidence to support this absence - this might include an appointment card or medication prescription.

Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided will be treated as unauthorised. Schools are

not obliged to accept parental explanation where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered.

Intervention at School Level

Registers are checked on a weekly basis within school.

Stage 1 - any child showing a drop in attendance will be monitored initially.

Stage 2 - should there be any further decline in attendance or noted patterns of absence, these will be followed up. This may take the form of a letter or a home visit. Parents will also be notified if 'odd day' absences are impacting upon attendance.

Stage 3 - should this early intervention fail to improve attendance and attendance subsequently fall further, a 4 week plan will be implemented.

Stage 4 - should school intervention prove unsuccessful in securing good attendance, children will be referred to the LA Attendance and Exclusion team.

Lateness

Any child arriving after the school gates are closed can only enter school via the main entrance, reporting to the School Office. If accompanied, a parent or carer should give a reason for the lateness, this will be recorded and added to the register. The child will then receive the appropriate late mark.

Morning registers must be completed and saved by 9am. Children arriving after 9.30am are marked as 'O' for unauthorised absence. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather), we may keep registers open for a reasonable period.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action may be taken.

What can parents do to help?

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is absent.
- Try to make appointments outside school time.
- Do not allow your child to have time off school unless it is really necessary.

If you are worried about your child's attendance at school what can you do?

- Talk to your child; it may be something simple.
- Talk to the Headteacher and staff at the school.