

## Attendance Policy

<b>Date:</b>	May 2016	<b>Review Date:</b>	May 2018
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### Our Mission Statement:

- We have high expectations of everyone
- We believe every child can and should achieve
- We want children to be happy and safe in our caring, Christian community
- We go the extra mile

### Types of Absence

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the appropriate register code will be used.

### Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness, medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- exclusion;
- traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents employment
- family bereavement;
- involvement in a public performance;
- 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis);

### Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence should not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, minding the house, etc);
- family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances).

### Persistent Absence

Persistent absence (or PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

### Approved Educational Activity

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Children who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises will be recorded as on an approved educational activity. This means that for statistical purposes such as educational visits, or approved sporting activities can be counted as statistically 'present'. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

### **Registers**

We are required by law to call attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. St Margaret's Lee expects parents/carers to ensure that children are on the school premises by 8.55am. The morning/afternoon register closes at 9.15am so pupils arriving between 9am and 9:15am will be marked with an L indicating they are late for school. However pupils arriving after the register has closed will be registered with a U showing they are present in school but were significantly late.

In considering attendance levels, the form register is of paramount importance. Registers are legal documents. Should the parents/carers of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

The School's policy with regard to registration will be regularly communicated to parents/carers/carers. St Margaret's Lee expects parents/carers/carers to ensure that children are on School premises by 8.55 am. Nursery pm children should be in by 1pm.

The data which is extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a (half-)termly and yearly basis;
- identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees;
- facilitate and encourage early intervention;
- identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism (for example, time lost to term-time holidays, regular absences on Mondays and/or Fridays, etc); match attendance trends with attainment trends;
- identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy;
- report attendance matters to parents/carers/carers.

### **First Day Response**

As a vigilant and caring school we apply first-day response to pupil absence. This means making a determined and sustained effort to respond to unexplained absence on the first morning of absence, usually through a telephone call.

### **Punctuality**

In addressing punctuality at St Margaret's Lee we:

- have clear procedures - registers close at 9.15 am;
- publicise this policy in School and communicate it to parents/carers/carers;

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- balance any sanctions with positive encouragement;
- praise and acknowledge punctuality and improvements in punctuality;
- ensure that teachers set a good example by arriving punctually for registration and for lessons;
- follow up the reasons for lateness and be alert to any emerging patterns or problems.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to monitor attendance and punctuality regularly. The Governing Body set attendance targets annually and are kept informed on attendance figures.

### **Leave of Absence**

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time.

Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance using the 'Request For Term Time Absence' form. Any request can only be authorised where School accepts there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Any parent/carer requesting leave of absence of 5 days or more will be asked to make an appointment to see the Headteacher/Chair of Governors to explain the circumstances.

Parents/carers risk losing their child's place on the School Roll if the pupil does not return to School on the agreed date of return and re-admission cannot be guaranteed as defined in legislation: The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended 2013).

Leave of absence in term-time will not be authorised:

- during September, when a pupil is just starting at School, as it is very important for the child to settle into their new class;
- during an assessment/test period – Key Stage 2 SATs
- when a pupil's attendance record already includes any worrying level of unauthorised absence;

### **Penalty Notices**

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and those absences are classed as unauthorised. 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. 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.

A Penalty Notice (issued by the Magistrates' Court) is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid by the deadline. In any case where the pupil meets the threshold for unauthorised absence a penalty notice will be considered.

In cases of unauthorised holidays warnings will be issued where sufficient notice of the intended absence has been given. This means that in some cases, Penalty Notices may be issued without a warning.

### **Absence for religious reasons**

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 2 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carer is a member.