

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

St Margaret's Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from their education, good attendance is crucial. As a school, we organise and do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede full attendance will be identified and addressed as soon as possible.

Purposes

1. To ensure that good attendance has a high priority with pupils, parents and teachers.
2. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence and address any patterns or concerns.
3. To recognise that matters relating to the quality of the curriculum and teaching and to the school's ethos and relationships are most significant in encouraging good attendance.
4. To understand the action that can be taken by the Local Authority to ensure good attendance.

Rights, responsibilities and roles

School

1. All relevant staff will understand and apply the school's registration process.
2. All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, by the class teacher electronically by SIMS.

NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable as they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.

3. The school will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents/carers through a variety of media: the school's website, newsletters, and school prospectus and parents meetings.
4. All absenteeism and lateness will be recorded accurately and monitored.

5. All pupils' with attendance below 96% will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.
6. The school will have clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness, allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
7. The school will annually review its Attendance Policy and associated procedures in consultation with the Local Authorities Attendance Improvement Service.

Parent(s)/carer(s)

1. Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action.
2. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
3. Parents/carers are responsible for immediately informing the school at which their child is registered of the reason for any absence by phone call or in person on the first morning of any absence and thereafter. This should be done before 9.30am.
4. Parents/carers should not take their child on holiday in term time and are to be made aware of the potential consequences of a Penalty Notice being issued or subsequent prosecution of doing so without the school's prior written permission.

Authorised/Unauthorised absence

All absences must be explained by parents/carers. The Headteacher will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence.

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences *may be* as follows:

- Illness (1)
- Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement
- Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (2)

This list is not exhaustive.

(1) Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a child has been absent for 3 days or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below 96% and/or the child is regularly away from school due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. Medical evidence can be in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication or an appointment card showing name of child and date they visited.

If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, evidence should be provided so that the appropriate support can be provided.

(2) Unavoidable medical/dental appointments

All routine (non emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a child need to have an appointment during school hours, such as in an emergency, hospital or CAMHS appointment, evidence of this will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school recording the absence as unauthorised.

Holidays in term time/ Leave of absence

Legislation

From the 1st September 2013 amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006¹ came into force.

These amendments remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are ***exceptional circumstances***.

Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

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Requesting the absence

All requests for a child to be absent from School during term time must be made in writing at least a half term in advance of the proposed absence by completing the absence request form obtainable from Reception.

The Headteacher or person with delegated responsibility will decide whether or not to authorise the absence, on a case by case basis, and will only do so where there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision. If parents/carers have not received a written response prior to the date of the proposed absence, the onus is upon them to contact the school to seek confirmation of the decision.

If the absence is unauthorised and still taken, the school may request the Local Authority to consider taking legal action against parents/carers which may result in the issuing of a penalty notice or Court proceedings being instigated for an offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance contrary to section 444 Education Act 1996.

If no absence request is made

If a child is absent from School during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the School will write to the parents/carers to inform them that the absence has not been authorised and that the school may request the Local Authority to consider taking legal action against parents/carers which may result in the issuing of a penalty notice or Court proceedings being instigated for an offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance contrary to section 444 Education Act 1996 unless the parents/carers can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an **exceptional circumstance** and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the absence, then a Penalty Notice will not be issued.

A Penalty Notice carries a penalty of £60 if paid in full within 21 days or £120 if paid in full after this time but within 28 days. The Local Authority are unable to accept part or late payments and there is no legal right to appeal the Penalty Notice once it has been issued. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid, this is likely to result in Court proceedings being taken against you for an offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance contrary to section 444 Education Act 1996. If convicted, you may face a fine of up to £2500 and/or a maximum 3 months imprisonment.

Please note: only **one** Penalty Notice will be issued **in any two year period**. This means that if a Penalty Notice is paid, and the child accumulates a further 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (5 school days), this will result in the parent/carer receiving a

summons to Court for an offence contrary to s444 Education Act. The matter cannot be dealt with by way of a further Penalty Notice being issued.

Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per child. A 'parent' can be any person, whether a natural parent or not, who has care of the child or young person.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

First day reporting

- Parents are reminded of the first day contact procedure at the beginning of each term via the school newsletter.
- On the first day of any absence the parent/carer should ring school before 9:30am to inform the school that their child will be absent from school and give a reason for that absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is to be requested. Staff must remind parent(s)/carer(s) to contact the school each day unless there is a definitive timescale of absence. For example there needs to be 48 hours clear from last bout of sickness and/or diarrhoea.
- A reason for absence is always required verbally by phone, or by email. The school may then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence. If no reason is provided within one week of return the school will mark the absences as unauthorised.
- Admin staff keep a log of absence calls and reasons received each day.
- After registration a designated member of staff will check registers for absences. If no call is made by parent(s)/carer(s) by 09:30, the designated member of staff will send a text message to parents to ascertain the reason for their child's absence.
- If any member of staff is concerned about an absence, the concerns will be raised with attendance lead at school/SWFV attendance officer to clarify any reasons or knowledge of the absence. If there are still concerns they will relay to the Head Teacher.
- Between 9:30am – 10:30am administrative staff will phone the parents/carers of any pupil whose absence remains unexplained.

If there is still no contact or explanation of child's absence:

- The school will work through the list of named contacts on the address card. If still no reason/response given, if they have a sibling at another school, the other school will be contacted to try and find a reason or ascertain whether there are shared concerns
- If those steps have not been successful, admin staff will notify the designated safeguarding lead who may speak to the school's welfare and attendance officer or family support worker if they are in school and / or the Head teacher. A home visit may be deemed appropriate.
- Finally if no contact of any sort has been made by the end of the school day the information will be logged with the DSL or deputy DSL who may log it with children's services.
- If there are 10 days of a child's continued absence then the information will be passed on to the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Service with a Child Missing from Education (CME) referral.

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If the child is subject to a child protection plan or if the school has particular safeguarding concerns and feel the child is at risk of immediate harm, the school will immediately notify the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) without waiting for 10 school days.

Lateness

There are two negative results caused by children who constantly arrive late. These are:

- The loss of education suffered by the child which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

- School gates will be locked at 9.00am prompt. Pupils who arrive after 9:00am are considered 'Late' (L) and will be required to enter the school via the main office to sign in and record the reason for their late arrival.
- Children who arrive after 09:20am should be considered as 'Late (after registers close)' (U). This is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

- All teachers will record the appropriate late mark in the registers and these will be entered into the computerised attendance programme.
- Late gates will be implemented on a regular basis.
- All pupils' attendance records will be checked every half term for lates before registers close (L) and lates after registers close (U).
- Where these late arrivals cumulate to 5 or more in a half term the school will write to parents/carers of the pupil to discuss any support needs and ways of accessing support.

Attendance letters

All pupils' attendance below 96% is monitored and tracked on a two weekly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

Attendance letter 1 will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 96%.

Attendance letter 2 will be sent after letter 1, this could be later in the same academic year if attendance has not improved, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the Welfare and Attendance Officer.

Attendance letter 3/ Medical Evidence letter will be sent if parents do not attend the meeting with the Welfare and Attendance Officer and/or if attendance continues to fall due to illness.

If, at any time, a child has 10 or more unauthorised absences within any 6 months period, the school will seek advice from the Local Authority to consider legal options available. Legal options include: Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and Prosecution. Please see the Local Authority website for further details.

Strategies for promoting attendance

Every week there is a class competition to gain the highest attendance rate. The winning class is announced in our Celebration Assembly and receive a certificate. Those children

in the winning class have 5 minutes extra playtime. Should the winning class have 100% attendance then they have 10 minutes extra playtime. If a class has the highest attendance rate 3 times in the academic year, they earn a non-uniform day.

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