

# ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC TEACHING SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Reviewed by:**

John Hopkins Assistant Head Teacher  
Review Date

**Date:**

September 2018  
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**Philosophy:**

Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school. Regular attendance is important if pupils are to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to them at St Thomas More School. Regular attendance is an important aspect of achievement, and prospective employers will look at attendance as part of their selection process.

Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and can result in pupils placing themselves at risk. The school will address the issue of high levels of absenteeism and lateness, being sensitive to the individual circumstances relating to poor attendance, with the possibility of such pupils and their families receiving appropriate support.

Good attendance is an integral part of the school ethos, with pupils being rewarded for regular and improved attendance and good punctuality. Good attendance can be achieved through the forging of meaningful relationships between school, home and support agencies, and by offering a curriculum that stimulates every pupil.

It is very important that every pupil attends school regularly. This Policy sets out how St Thomas More School will work with parents/carers and pupils to achieve this.

**Statutory Obligations:**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that “the parent of every pupil of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) To age, ability and aptitude and
  - (b) To any special educational needs he/ she may have
- Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”

**Regular Attendance:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a pupil's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring regular attendance at school is a legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

St Thomas More Catholic School will monitor attendance as outlined in this policy

## **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping pupils off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school after the register closes
- Shopping, looking after other children/dependants or birthdays
- Day trips which have not been agreed.
- Holidays in term-time

## **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any pupil's educational prospects and we need parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

## **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher receiving vital information and news for the day. Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the pupil and can also encourage absence.

## **Aims of this Policy**

- To improve the overall percentage attendance of pupils at school, especially those who are Persistent Absentees.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority with those associated with the school including students, carers, teachers and governors.
- To have a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to pupils, parents and carers.
- To have a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To ensure positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and other agencies and services

- To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

**Aim 1: To improve the overall percentage attendance of pupils at the school, especially those who are Persistent Absentees**

- Apply whole school attendance policy consistently
- Have a strategic action plan for attendance
- Have a zero tolerance on holidays in term- time
- Maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality
- Relate attendance issues directly to the schools' values, ethos and curriculum
- Monitor progress in attendance in measurable outcomes.

**Aim 2: To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents/carers, staff and Governors**

- Produce termly reports to Governors
- Hold an induction meeting for new students and parents/carers
- Provide Inset training for newly appointed staff
- Display school attendance target in form rooms and around school
- Discuss attendance issues in meetings with EWO and Progress Coordinators
- Continue with a variety of reward systems.

**Aim 3: Have a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks**

- Maintain unambiguous procedures for statutory registration e.g. computerised system
- Follow procedure for first day absence using designated staff
- Ensure clearly defined late registration procedures
- Respond swiftly to lateness (in respect of both students and parents)
- Define clearly the roles and responsibilities within the school staffing structure
- Progress Coordinators and Assistant Head (Pastoral) to meet fortnightly to review attendance and regularly liaise with the EWO to review attendance
- Be familiar with the EWO referral system and use of penalty warnings and notices, use of pre referral meetings and parenting contracts

**Parental Responsibility:**

If your child is going to be absent you must:

- Contact the school by telephone as soon as possible on the first day of absence

- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you

If your child is going to be late you must:

- Provide an explanation for the lateness to a member of the office staff

**Form tutors will:**

- Record attendance accurately
- Promote the attendance ethic within the tutor group
- Provide pastoral support with the Progress Coordinator
- Place the pupil on report if he/she is persistently late

**Subject teachers will:**

- Strive to encourage pupils to succeed in the curriculum
- Act as role models by being punctual to lessons and duties
- Challenge pupils who are late to lesson or missing from lesson

**The School Attendance administration person will:**

- Contact a parent/carer, who has not informed the school of the non-attendance, requesting them to contact the school
- Contact by telephone some parents/carers, who do not contact the school. This will be at the discretion of the Assistant Head Teacher
- Provide fortnightly reports for Heads of Year indicating those pupils with attendance of 90% or below which includes any reasons given for the absence.
- Agree with Progress Coordinators which pupils receive an “attendance concern” letter
- Contact parents/carers by telephone when a pupil is persistently late.

**Progress Coordinators will:**

- Oversee and monitor all attendance matters within the year group
- Produce certificates for end of term assemblies for 100% attendance
- Ensure a high profile with regards to attendance – related issues in tutorial programme and assemblies
- Work jointly with the school attendance officer to identify pupils who have improved their attendance/punctuality and send a letter to parents/carers to praise the pupil.
- Work jointly with the school attendance officer to identify pupils who are persistently late/absent and parents/carers are contacted.

- Progress Coordinators meet fortnightly with the EWO to review attendance regularly
- Hold detentions for pupils who arrive late

**Aim 4: To provide support, advice and guidance to pupils and carers**

- To highlight the importance of attendance in PHSE, tutor time and assemblies
- To involve parents/carers at an early stage (Parenting contracts)
- Seek improved communication with parents using EWS
- Work with Connexions and other appropriate agencies when supporting individual students and their families

**Aim 5: To have a systematic approach in gathering and analysing attendance related data**

- Sustain the SIMS registration system
- Standardise the recording of authorised/unauthorised absence
- Be consistent in collecting and providing information
- Identify developing patterns of irregular attendance and lateness
- Identify any particular cohorts of pupils with poor attendance and lateness

**Aim 6: To ensure positive and consistent communication between home and school**

- Monitor first day absence contact
- Make full use of computer generated letters
- Promote expectation of absence letters/telephone calls from parents/carers
- Provide information in a user friendly way. (languages other than English where appropriate)
- Encourage all parents/carers into school.
- Arrange home visits where appropriate with the EWO

**Aim 7: To promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and other agencies and services**

- Designate key staff for liaison with the EWO and other agencies
- Give priority to timetabled meetings with EWO
- Undertake initial enquiries/intervention prior to referral.
- Gather and record relevant information prior to referral
- Arrange multi agency meetings as appropriate
- Establish and maintain a list of named contacts within the local community e.g. police liaison
- Encourage active involvement of other services and agencies in the life of the school
- Ensure up to date information is available on vulnerable students:  
Children Looked After, Children in Need, children on the Child Protection Register, Young Carers, Young Offenders, children with English as a Second Language

**Aim 8: To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence**

- Involve pupils, parents/carers and the relevant professionals in the reintegration plan including Emmaus staff
- Be sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of the returning pupils
- Inform all relevant staff of the reintegration process and involve them in it
- Agree timescale for review of reintegration plan