

St. Margaret's C.E.



# St. Margaret's C of E. Primary School

## Attendance Policy January 2023

Reviewed and Approved by FGB Jan 2023

To be reviewed Jan 2024

Strategic approach to attendance lead- Mr D Whittle (Headteacher)

Attendance officer- Miss D Bilton (School Administrator)

Local Authority Attendance Officer- Mr T Ali

## **The importance of school attendance**

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Some families find it harder than others to ensure their child attends school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with school's efforts on curriculum, behavior, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organization, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

## **The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education**

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

## **Purpose of this policy**

To ensure that all children at St Margaret's Primary School have access to the full provision of education without unnecessary or avoidable disruption through poor attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and local authority agencies so that all pupils realize their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

## Expectations

From pupils:

- They attend school regularly;
- They arrive on time.

From parents:

- They ensure their child/children attend school;
- They ensure their child/children arrive at school on time
- They contact the school office before the start of the school day whenever their child/children is/are unable to attend;
- They respond to any correspondence from the school;
- They attend any meetings about their child's/children's attendance, that may be necessary.

Start and finish times:

Nursery 8.45am-11.45 am (am only) 12.30pm-3.30pm (pm only) 8.45am-3.30 pm (full day)

Reception 8.55am-3.15pm

Fox Class 8.45am- 3.05pm

Chamber Class 8.45am- 3.05pm

Brook Class 8.55am-3.15pm

Twist Class 8.45am-3.05pm

Devon Class 8.55am- 3.15pm

Durban Class 8.55am-3.15pm

Heron Class 8.45am-3.05pm

Oak Class 8.45am-3.05pm

Registers close 10 minutes after start times. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late. Children arriving after registers close, will be recorded as U (unauthorized late). 10 unauthorized lates in a 12 week period may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued by the Oldham Council Attendance Service. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern the following escalation of action will be taken.

1. Letter home with details of lateness and an invitation to meet with the Headteacher and Attendance Officer.
2. Referral to the Oldham Council Attendance Service.

Late marks adversely affect your child's time in lessons and associated learning.

Pupils and parents can expect the following from the school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance and time keeping;
- Contact from the school when a pupils fail to attend and no contact is made by a parent/carer;
- Early contact with parents to offer support when a pupil fails to attend without good reason and there is a pattern of absences or an excessive number of absences or lateness;
- Positive measures to encourage good attendance;
- A high quality education;
- regular reviews of attendance data by governors
- staff receive training to enhance their understanding of the importance of good attendance and measures to improve poor attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families.

All partners should work together to:

**MONITOR** Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

**EXPECT** Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritizing attendance improvement across the school.

**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND** When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

**FACILITATE SUPPORT** Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

**FORMALISE SUPPORT** Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalizing support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

**ENFORCE** Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## Positive measures to encourage good attendance

- Registers are completed accurately twice each day (at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session).
- Daily monitoring by class teachers - contact made with the school administrator to raise concerns where appropriate.
- Regular monitoring by the Headteacher and School Administrator of attendance and punctuality using the school's MIS systems and FFT Aspire Attendance Tracker
- Attendance reviews and meetings with parents as required.
- Each child's attendance is reported to parents/carers at Parent Evening/Meetings as well as end of year reports with a grade awarded.
- Attendance is championed by the headteacher and referred to in staff briefings and assemblies to keep it at the forefront of everyone's minds. The weekly attendance cup has introduced an element of friendly competition for attendance.
- Annual class reward for the class who have had the best attendance in the school year
- postcards and rewards for persistent absentees with improved attendance
- '100% attendance club' - certificates and termly prizes for children with 100% attendance

## Types of absence

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

- Authorized: The school approves pupil absence

Examples of authorized absence:

- Genuine illness of the pupil
- Major religious observance
- External exams or educational assessments
- Visits to prospective new schools
- Approved sporting activity

- Unauthorized: The school will *not* approve pupil absence

Examples of unauthorized absence:

- **Holidays in term time**
- Shopping
- A birthday treat
- Oversleeping due to a late night
- Appointments/illness of other family members
- No reason given for absence.

The school is responsible for children's attendance and only the Headteacher can authorize absences.

## Absence Procedures

If a child is absent, parents/carers should call the school on each day of the absence before the start of the school day stating a reason for the absence. The school attendance officer will then decide whether to authorize the absence.

If contact explaining the child's absence fails to be made by parents/carers then a member of the school office staff will telephone to find out the reason for absence. Furthermore, if a telephone message is not specific about a child's absence then a follow up phone call will be made to determine the reason for absence to allow it to be coded correctly. If telephone contact cannot be made and there are safeguarding concerns then a home visit will be made by a member of staff on the child's first day of absence. If there are no safeguarding concerns but telephone contact has not been made, a home visit would be made on day three of the child's absence. Further follow up action (attendance officer, MASH, Police Safe and Well check) may be necessary should contact not be able to be made. Schools will follow Oldham's Missing from Education procedures if this is the case. If no satisfactory reason for absence can be obtained, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorized.

Pupils' attendance is closely monitored by the school attendance officer and the headteacher using both the school's MIS system and FFT Aspire Attendance Tracker: pupils are categorised into risk categories based on percentage assessment which allows any patterns to be spotted quickly and early intervention as needed. Pupil data sits alongside identification of barriers and interventions to remove them. Detailed records are kept of any pupils whose attendance drops below 95% and of any subsequent communication between the parents/carers and school. Attendance data and reports are shared half termly with governors. Attendance data is benchmarked against local, regional and national data.

1. When a pupil's attendance drops below 95% a letter will be sent to the parents/carers. This letter provides the parents/carers with a summary of their child's attendance data (in terms of the amount of time missed and the impact on their child's learning) and an explanation of the next steps that will be taken if their child's attendance should become a further concern. The letter also indicates that the school is willing to offer any potential support that might mitigate against the reasons for poor attendance. A text message with the attendance data summary and alerting the parent/carer to expect a letter will also be sent at this point.
2. If, after the sending of this initial letter, the pupil's attendance does not improve and falls below 93% as a result of unauthorised absences, then a second letter will be sent explaining that the pupil's attendance has not improved and inviting the parents/carers to attend a meeting with the headteacher, school attendance officer and possibly the Local Authority attendance officer. This letter will include information about the Local Authority procedures that may be followed if the pupil's attendance does not improve and the number of unauthorized absences in a given period meets the threshold for the issuing of a fixed penalty notice. The purpose of the meeting is to establish if there is any support that the school can provide or broker in order to improve the pupil's attendance. The meeting also serves to explain clearly to parents the next steps that will be taken if the pupil's attendance does not improve.

3. If a pupil's attendance has not improved due to unauthorized absence following the meeting with the Headteacher and Attendance Officers then a further letter will be sent explaining that medical evidence will be requested for future absences. A further meeting with the Headteacher and Attendance Officers will be requested at this point.
4. If a pupil's attendance continues to decline due to unauthorized absences, the school will request that the Local Authority Attendance Officer 'fastrack' the pupil's attendance monitoring. For a period of 8 weeks the pupil's attendance will be closely monitored by the local authority and where a pupil has been absent for 10 sessions (5 days) or more in this period their parents or carers may receive a penalty notice of £60 per parent per pupil if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid within 28 days.

### **Holidays 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 subsequent lessons on their return- consequently this puts pupils at potential risk of underachievement.

Family holidays should be planned during the school holidays. Holidays in term time cannot be considered to be authorized absences, so they will always be unauthorized absences unless the Headteacher is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant leave.

In accordance with the Local Authority Attendance Policy, parents will be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice fine for holidays of 5 days or more.

Please be aware that leave of absence of 20 days or more will result in a child losing their place in the school.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. The headteacher will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

### **Religious observances**

Schools should be aware that staff, pupils and their families could be involved with religious observation, celebrations or commemorations in their communities.

On some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods, weekends or closure days and this necessitates consideration of special leave for religious observance for children and families practicing that particular faith.

In the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting unauthorized absence, no more than 1 day is permitted for any individual occasion and no more than 2 days per academic year, to enable children and their families to observe their main religious festivals. Examples of these are Eid, Diwali, Indian or Chinese New Year and Passover.

There is no entitlement to time off in lieu for observances that fall on a weekend or a non-school day.

### **Medical Appointments**

Medical appointments can adversely affect a child's attendance, therefore wherever possible non-urgent medical appointments such as routine optician/dentist/doctors appointments should be made outside of school hours. If the appointment must take place during the school day e.g. hospital appointment, you will need to hand a copy of the letter into the school office. Children attending urgent appointments should not stay off school for the whole day, unless absolutely necessary.

### **Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities**

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, we will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

This should include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed.
- Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working with parents/carers to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- Establishing strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensuring joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
- Ensuring data is regularly monitored for these groups including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

## What can parents do to help?

- Let the school know as soon as possible why your child is absent.
- Try to make non urgent appointments outside of 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 you should...

- Talk to your child; it may be something simple.
- Talk to the Headteacher and staff at the school to see if there is any support that can be provided in helping your child's attendance to improve.
- The school may refer to the Attendance Service at Oldham Council.

You may contact the Attendance Officer, who will work with you and the school to resolve the situation. (Telephone number available from the School Office).

## Responsibility

In order for this policy to be successful every member of the school community must make attendance a high priority.

## Ways to report your child's absence

School email:

[info@stmargarets.oldham.sch.uk](mailto:info@stmargarets.oldham.sch.uk)

School telephone: 0161 770  
5900

## Conclusion

A child's education can be adversely affected by poor attendance. At St Margaret's Primary School we place great emphasis on good attendance being essential in helping children have full access to the curriculum and achieve their potential.

