



Attendance Policy 2023-2024

Our Mission:

We try to follow Jesus in everything we do.

We help everybody in our school family and we try to let our light shine as the light of Jesus shines.

Everyone at St. Margaret Mary's is special. We feel happy and safe.
We are encouraged to value ourselves and each other in an atmosphere of trust, good humour, acceptance and enjoyment.

Saint Margaret Mary's school is where we come to learn through exciting and fun lessons. We try to always be welcoming and caring to all. We want to do our best, even if we find it difficult.

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Date agreed by Governing Body	
Review Date	Annually
Chair of Governors	A Ager

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1. Introduction

1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 St Margaret Mary's believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 St Margaret Mary's values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will build strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school and identify the reasons for poor attendance.

1.4 St Margaret Mary's recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by the following policies:

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Behaviour
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Curriculum

This policy takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

1.5 This policy aims to:

- Promote good attendance
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Promote early identification to address patterns of absence
- Promote and support punctuality in attending lessons

2. Legal Framework

2.1 This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

2.2 Legal proceedings are a statutory intervention used by the local authority against the parents of registered pupils who fail to attend regularly at school. Parents whose children are on a school register and fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child(ren), may be guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and the authority may take enforcement action through the courts to secure regular attendance.

2.3 Legal proceedings are not used as a punishment to parents for their pupil's absence from school; they are a supportive measure intended to make parents realise the importance of attendance and to avoid further absence from school.

2.4 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A prosecution can take place against any person who has parental responsibility for the child's education or who has care of the child. Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children are properly educated.

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. If you allow your child to be absent from school without good reason, the school will not authorise the absence, you may be committing an offence, and you could be issued with a penalty notice or prosecuted.

2.5 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

2.6 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

2.7 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.8 The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present
- absent
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

3. Safeguarding

3.1 Every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm.

We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

3.2 Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Our schools duty of safeguarding includes early help and support to children and families having trouble with attendance and lateness.

Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education will be considered a safeguarding matter if this places a child at risk of harm.

3.3 Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility at St Margaret Mary's.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses attendance.

3.4 More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

3.5 In order to allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

3.6 It is also important for parents to inform the school of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances.

4. Categorising Absence

4.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

4.2 Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

4.3 Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

4.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

4.4.1 Illness Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the head teacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc. This includes if a pupil is absent due to circumstances related to COVID-19.

4.4.2 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.

4.4.3 Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

4.4.4 Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

4.4.5 Religious Observance St Margaret Mary's acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration by written request by the parent of authorised absence.

4.4.6 Traveller Absence It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1996, section 444(6), states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in the year preceding the absence. This applies only when the family proves it is engaged in a trade or business that requires it to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

St Margaret Mary's will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at St Margaret Mary's will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

St Margaret Mary's can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must: advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

St Margaret Mary's will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.

4.4.7 Late Arrival Registration begins at 8:55am a.m. pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late.

The register will close at 9.25 a.m. (*no more than thirty minutes after the opening of the register.*) Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late, (code U) this is not authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

On arrival after the close of register, parents must accompany their child to the school office and sign them in.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause/

4.4.8 Unauthorised absence - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the head teacher. Unsatisfactory explanations would be, but not limited to:

- A child or family member's birthday
- A shopping trip
- A day trip out
- A child didn't wake up in time for school

4.5 All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.

4.5.1 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

4.5.2 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases, the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the Magistrates court.

5. Deletions from the Register

5.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

5.2 St Margaret Mary's will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

6.2 The Headteacher is the designated Senior Leader responsible for School Attendance and is responsible for:

- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Leading attendance across the school
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Matthew Sutton (Headteacher) and can be contacted via 0161 681 1504 or head@st-margaretmarys.manchester.sch.uk

6.3 The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

The attendance officer is Mrs Murphy and can be contacted via 0161 681 1504 or s.murphy@st-margaretmarys.manchester.sch.uk

6.4 Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office within 10 minutes of the register being taken on that school day.

6.5 Admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the Headteacher & Deputy Headteacher in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

6.6 Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.30 a.m. on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence where necessary, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

6.7 Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

7. Using Attendance Data

7.1 The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly and at strategic points throughout the year, across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether there are groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern including: SEND, Disadvantaged and Vulnerable pupils.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data

is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop and implement effective strategies to address these patterns/

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, SLT, governors and parents to facilitate improvements
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Daily monitoring of attendance
- Weekly attendance monitoring and strategic analysis
- Weekly attendance rewards from “St Margaret Mary’s Attendance Prize Shop” including those that have improved
- Informal meetings with parents / carers
- Formal meetings with parents / carers
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to support families and improve attendance
- Early Help intervention / meetings
- Signposting to other agencies where necessary

8. Support Systems

8.1 School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties and trauma in a child’s life.

This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child’s attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required, working collaboratively and in partnership.

8.2 St Margaret Mary’s also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, disadvantaged pupils, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

8.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance for all pupils.

Strategies used will include:

- Ensure praise and small rewards are given where a child's attendance has improved to provide encouragement; including visiting "St Margaret Mary's Attendance Prize Shop"
- Our weekly "St Margaret Mary's Attendance Prize Shop" where children with excellent attendance and punctuality that week will be selected to receive a reward / prize
- Students will appear on our "Attendance" display board to promote excellent attendance school wide
- We will follow our Attendance Distributed Leadership model as shown attached as part of our escalation process and our graduated approach to school attendance
- Positive and supportive meetings with parents / carers to see how school can support the families as well as the child
- Intervention with our CARITAS Social Worker if needed
- Referrals to School Health or Early Help where required

8.4 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, St Margaret Mary's will consider the use of legal sanctions.

9. Legal Interventions

9.1 Prosecution

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

9.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

9.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of up to three months.

9.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

9.2 Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target.

9.2.1 The contract will be reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

9.2.2 Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Parenting Contract Protocol.

9.3 Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
 - A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the Headteacher.
- 9.3.1 A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued/
- 9.3.2 Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
- 9.3.3 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council’s Penalty Notice Protocol.

Appendix 1 – Attendance Distributed Leadership Model

GREEN - Pupils with attendance between 100% to 97%

- Parents/ Carers will receive a half-termly letter congratulating them on their excellent attendance.
- Pupils will be rewarded within the school's award systems in recognition of good/excellent attendance each Friday at our "Attendance Prize Shop."
- Pupils with this level of termly and annual attendance will receive a certificate of achievement and their names will be displayed on the school attendance notice/display board.

AMBER – GREEN Pupils with attendance between 96% and 94%

(NB Autumn term and number of days in school over absence will significantly impact %. As a result, close monitoring will occur alongside appropriate choice if supportive actions needed.)

Attendance Officer / Admin staff will speak with parents directly to:

- Confirm with the parent the reason for absence and offer any support that may be required.
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil to support improving their attendance.
- In addition, where unauthorised absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review, a letter will be sent to parents advising of concern and outlining their responsibilities.

Where improvement has not occurred following this intervention, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- All parties confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve swiftly within an agreed period.
- Does the family need support through an Early Help Assessment?
- Is a referral needed or additional interventions to support pupil?

AMBER-RED Pupils with attendance between 93% and 91%

Headteacher/ Attendance Officer will speak to the parent to:

- Identify underlying barriers that may be causing the pupil's absence and consider appropriate support such as Early Help, Manchester Thrive Hubs etc.
- Review the pupil's academic progress and make links to the pupil's attendance
- Communicate the work missed due to school's absence
- If necessary school will implement a Pastoral Support Plan or review other existing pupil plans to include support and improve attendance. If required a multi-agency meeting or review will take place to address concerns.
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil before the next review dates and agree a review date

In addition, where unauthorised absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review, a letter will be sent to parent/carer advising of concern and possible future statutory action.

If improvement has not occurred following this intervention, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- All parties confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve.
- Parenting contract agreed where required.
- Penalty Notice 15 school day monitoring period commences
- Agree a review date

- Where parents fail to attend the meeting without a satisfactory reason and unauthorised absence has occurred, the penalty notice monitoring period will automatically commence.

Where these interventions have already been implemented and have had unsatisfactory impact, the parent will be invited to an Attendance Panel where the possible outcomes will be:

- Support offered through an Early Help Assessment (EHA) with the school acting as lead professional
- A referral to the Local Authority will be carried out where a parent fails to attend planned meetings without providing a satisfactory reason and where a minimum of two home visits have been carried out
- The Headteacher and Attendance Officer will be responsible for all actions and outcomes and monitoring of attendance post meeting / panel.

RED- Pupils with attendance below 90%

To ensure that intervention is focused and meets the needs of individuals, pupils may be grouped into any of the following categories to ensure they receive personalised support to meet need and address reasons for absence including:

- Looked After Children and Children on the Child Protection Register
- Any children who have previously been missing or absent in education
- Special Educational Needs
- School age parents/expectant parents
- Parental support/needs e.g. parental drug use, young carers, domestic violence
- School issues e.g. bullying, poor teacher/pupil relationship, curriculum issues
- Offended or have an Anti-Social Behaviour Order
- English as an Additional Language
- Ethnic minority
- Mid-Year Admissions
- Other

The Headteacher alongside the Attendance Officer will:

- Ensure that the pupil has already spoken to a member of staff at the stages preceding RED intervention (AMBER-RED intervention will occur in cases where the pupil has immediately fallen from GREEN into RED)
- Obtain records of previous contact and interventions as set out in AMBER-RED and escalate accordingly
- Ensure that weekly contact occurs with the pupil either individually or within a small group to address themed issues
- Ensure that weekly contact with the parents to discuss any arising issues and to provide feedback on their child's attendance, pastoral and academic progress.
- Review existing plans and co-ordinate school resources to support the pupil's attendance and any additional needs
- Be the key contact person for any external agency working with the pupil
- Input into whole school strategies to address the needs of pupils within their group
- Each identified member of staff will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes. All actions and interventions will be recorded.
- Co-ordinate multi-agency meeting to address concerns
- Where appropriate initiate statutory action

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school self-evaluation and impact of interventions.

The review will include:

- Children in Amber-Green/Amber-Red/Red
- What actions, if needed, have been taken place
- Which children have moved groups

Attendance will be a standing item on the agenda of the Senior Leadership Team meetings where the progress of these groups will be reported and the effectiveness of interventions measured. This will be used to review and inform intervention.

The Headteacher will report to the Chair of Governors about attendance each half term and will report termly to the Governing Body on attendance matters including the percentage of persistently absent pupils and the effectiveness of strategies to improve attendance.

Appendix 2

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1996, section 444(6), states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in the year preceding the absence. This applies only when the family proves it is engaged in a trade or business that requires it to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

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St Margaret Mary's can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates
- St Margaret Mary's will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.
- Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:
 - The child is on roll and attending another visited school
 - Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
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- Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.