

**St Thomas More Catholic  
Primary School**

**Securing Good School  
Attendance Policy**

**January 2024**

## **St Thomas More Catholic Primary School**

### **Attendance Policy**

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils/students and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based upon the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

Everyone – including pupils/students, parents and carers, all school staff, school governors, Local Authority, external agencies – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. We are committed to working in partnership with families and other agencies to achieve best outcomes for children via the early help pathways available.

We believe that ours is a successful, welcoming school which you and your child/children plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of our school community to achieve excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school, on time, every day on which the school is open (Isle of Wight V Platt) unless the reason for the absence is exceptional.

All staff (teaching and support) at our school have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils/students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

Regular attendance is so important as it gives your child the best opportunity to learn. Any absences will affect the pattern of your child's schooling and consistent absences may seriously affect learning. Any child's absence disrupts teaching routines, not only for your child but for others in the same class.

The school liaises closely with our Local Authority and other agencies using an Early Help pathway (Early Help Referral) which assists in the assessment of need in order for appropriate support to be given. This initial pathway enables further referrals to external agencies to be made and further support acquired to support families to remove any barriers that are preventing regular attendance.

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

## **Definition of a parent/carer in Education Law**

It's important that schools and local authorities are aware that parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

For the purposes of education law, the department considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not.
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative.
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

## The Law relating to attendance and the right to a full-time education

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that ‘the parent of every child 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’

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.

The Isle of Wight Council v Platt case (2017) considered by the Supreme Court makes it clear that regular attendance shall mean in accordance with the school rules. Therefore, any non-attendance which is not in accordance with the school rules will be deemed unauthorised. The school rules are determined by the school and are the days and hours that they are open for pupils to attend. Under this judgment all children registered at a school should attend 100% of the time unless there are exceptional circumstances that prevent this.

## The Law relating to Safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State regarding safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is **everyone’s responsibility** and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: -

Attendance	Anti-Bullying
Behaviour Management	Access to the Curriculum
Health and Safety	Wellbeing

**Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.** Creating and maintaining a pattern of punctual and regular attendance is **everybody’s** responsibility – parents/carers, pupils, school staff and, external agencies.

Peterborough City Council in line with the Admissions Code, offer all children in the September following their fourth birthday a full-time place at school if requested by their parents/carers.

## Reception Intake Induction period

Our School uses a very short induction period where Reception aged children are introduced to their formal education over 2 days to assist in their transition to full-time education. You will be notified of the timetable for our Reception children for September in advance.

At our school all children are expected to be in school before the end of registration, so that they are settled and ready to start the school day.

## Expectations and Daily routines

Our school starts at 8.45am and we expect all children to be in class by this time. Registers are marked at 8.55am and close at 9.15am.

Your child will receive an unauthorised late mark if they arrive after the register is closed. Your child will be given a 'U' code (unauthorised late) in line with regulations, and this may mean that you face legal action if they persist.

When your child is late, they miss the start of the day, they can miss work, and this will impact on their learning. Late arrivals also disrupt lessons for other pupils in the class, which is not fair on them or your child.

### Absence Procedure

- If your child is going to be absent from school, you must contact the school on the first day by 9.15am and subsequent days of absence and inform the school the reason for the absence (unless it is a diagnosed medical condition and evidence is on file). You can do this by leaving a message on the school attendance line. **(Speak clearly and leave your child's name, class and reason for absence)**

### If your child is absent and you do not contact us, we may, under our safeguarding policy:

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day and every following day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Contact emergency numbers held on our database
- Undertake a home visit if no contact is received from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with us
- Call 101 (Police) and request a safe and well check if all other attempts to contact you fail to get a response
- Take legal action if there are persistent absences, which may be in the form of penalty notices issued to each parent/carer for each child or legal action through the courts.

### Who to contact if you or your child/children have questions or concerns about attendance?

- Day-to-day – speak to the class teacher or the school office.
- More detailed support – speak to the School Attendance Lead, Mrs Smee. You can contact the school office by telephone (01733 566005) or email us on (office@st-thomasmoreprimary.com) and a call back or appointment will be organised for you.

### Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **The School Attendance Officer:**

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority Attendance Officer from Peterborough City Council, School Attendance Team. S/he will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can recommend that the Local Authority use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at **8.45am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by **8.55am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.10am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that will indicate that your child is in the school building, but will be marked with a 'U' Code which is recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with us to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

## Data and Monitoring

### **How we monitor attendance/absence**

We keep track all our children's attendance and absences thoroughly through regular reports from our Management Information System (MIS (*ScholarPack*)) We look at the reports on a regular basis to track any concerns that may arise due to unauthorised absences and to ensure that any interventions are timely and appropriate.

We routinely monitor attendance and absences daily, weekly, half termly, termly and annually to assist the school in providing support and/or changes to our process where necessary to provide the correct support to families.

We analyse all patterns of absence, both authorised and unauthorised\* and try to ensure that parents/carers are informed of any child's attendance that fails below the National Average to prevent your child becoming a persistent absentee (PA) which means that they have an attendance below 90%. A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss **10%** or more schooling within an agreed period **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level may cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need full parent/carers support and co-operation to tackle this.

Our interventions at this stage may include, but is not limited to:

- writing to parents/carers if attendance drops below the school's threshold of **97%**.
- requesting that they provide evidence to support absences

- calling a School Attendance Meeting
- making an Early Help Referral
- referring to the Local Authority for support

PA pupils are also tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we may also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

### Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by parents/carers) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Therefore, information about the cause of any absence is essential, preferably in writing so that it can be recorded correctly.

**Authorised** absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for an exceptional circumstance such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other exceptional cause authorised by the Headteacher.

**Unauthorised** absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been authorised. These include, but are not limited to:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children, acting as interpreters or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time not authorised as an exceptional circumstance
- medical treatment overseas (unless part of emergency treatment whilst abroad on an authorised absence).

This type of absence can lead to the Peterborough City Council, School Attendance Team, using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Whilst any child may be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is **never** an option to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

### **Impact analysis**

As part of our data analysis and monitoring process we will regularly assess the outcomes of our support/interventions to measure the impact that they are having on the improvement of children's attendance and attainment.

We will continue to meet with and engage with families to find out and help resolve any barriers to regular attendance, including signposting or referring to other agencies.

We will regularly review cases to ensure that the school is providing the appropriate support/referrals as legal action, for our school is a last resort, but sometimes cannot be avoided.

## Legal Interventions

### Fixed penalty notices

When we may request a fixed penalty notice to be issued by the Local Authority in line with the Local Authority's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for unauthorised leave of absence or where all support interventions do not secure an improvement in attendance.

### Leave of absence/single absence event

As a school we ask parents/carers **not** to take children out of school without the permission of the Headteacher as per the Law and Legislation. Please remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

Headteacher's must comply with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave of absence must be made in advance. In deciding about whether to authorise the leave the Headteacher will consider the circumstances of each application individually taking into account the evidence submitted in support. If the request is refused the Headteacher will inform all parties of their decision. If the Headteacher grants the request it is for the Headteacher to **determine** the length of time the pupil can be away from school.

It is important that you understand that we may **only** authorise such absences in **exceptional circumstances**. It is unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for the purpose of a family holiday.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school (with at least four weeks' notice) and/or different from that agreed by the school will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice per parent/carer per child.

### Absence due to Non School Attendance (Irregular/Persistent Absenteeism)

Where the school has implemented attendance interventions and parent/carers have failed to support the school, the school may request a penalty notice under the Peterborough City Council, Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

A penalty notice can be issued if **one** of the following criteria can be met

- Level of unauthorised absence leads to an unauthorised absence rate of **10%** or more within a minimum period of any 8 school weeks (A maximum of 2 penalty notices for ongoing attendance concerns may be issued in any academic year)
- A single unauthorised absence event of at least 2 consecutive school days (4 consecutive sessions)
- Persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed contribute to a level of unauthorised absence at **10%** or above.
- Lack of adherence to the dates agreed for any authorised leave of absence without reasonable justification
- Pupils identified in a public place whilst excluded from school (during the first five days of the exclusion period) without reasonable justification.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is at risk of moving towards the Persistent Absence (PA) level is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we may also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

For further information regarding Penalty Notices please refer to the **Peterborough City Council Code of Conduct** which is available on the Peterborough City Council Website

### **Deletions from Register**

Under Section 8-(1) (h), (i), (ii), (iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 should your child fail to return to school by the time that registration ends on the 20th day of absence the school is permitted to delete your child's name from their register.

This is possible if your child(ren) have not returned by the date specified because the following applies under Section 8 (h) - that he/she/they will have been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days and

(i) at no time was the absence during that period authorised by the proprietor in accordance with regulation 6 (2);

(ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil(s) is/are unable to attend the school by reason of sickness, or any exceptional cause;

## Escalation of Procedures

### **When we escalate cases to higher level legal interventions**

The school will make every effort to support families/children whose attendance is causing concern. However, there are some circumstances where despite the school's, the Local Authority's and extended work through multiple agencies fails to improve the attendance of children and at this point the school may instigate, or request that the Local Authority instigates a more formal legal intervention.

If this occurs a case may be prepared and presented to the Magistrates Court for prosecution under Section 444 (1) or 444 (1a) of the Education Act 1996.

The outcome of these cases will be determined by the courts, of which can be:

- where convicted under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996, you may be fined up to £1,000.
- where convicted under Section 444(1a) Education Act 1996 you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence.
- Impose a Parenting Order

## Incentives and Rewards

How our school is **promoting** and incentivising good attendance.

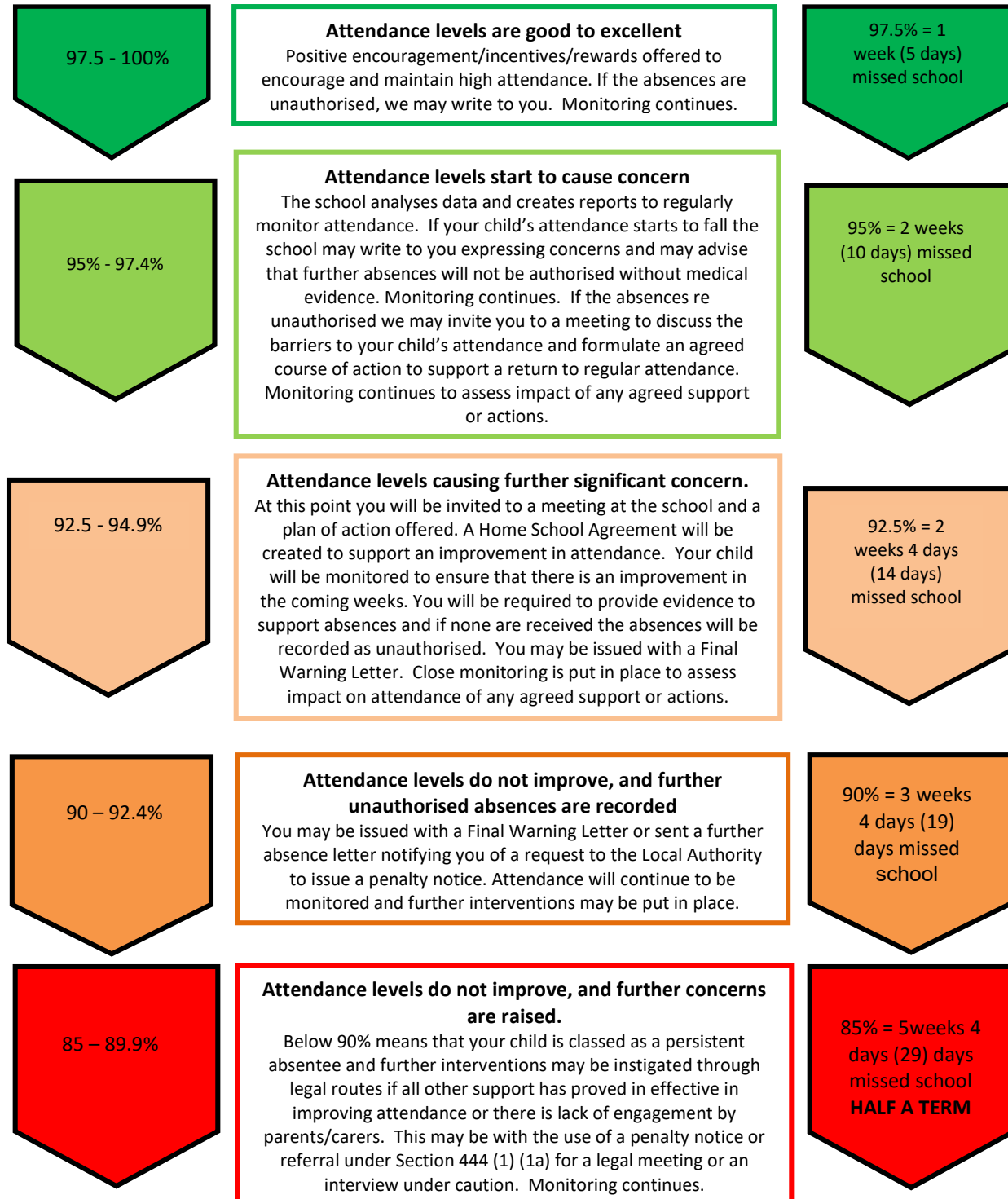
### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Having a whole school approach to attendance
- Provide details on attendance in our school app.
- Report to you regularly on how your child/children are performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment and rate of progress
- Update you at parent/carer evenings'
- Celebrate and reward good and improving attendance through weekly, half term and term events. Through assemblies and displays throughout the school.



## Our monitoring/intervention strategy

Below is the basis of our intervention pathway. We treat each child individually and therefore each case may take a different route depending on the barriers, needs of the family and any other circumstances which may be impacting on regular attendance. We try to take a holistic approach to dealing with and resolving barriers to non-school attendance and use legal interventions as a last resort.



## Expectations of academy trust boards and/or governing bodies

Our academy trust board and/or governing body will have high expectations for attendance at our school.

It is their role to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- Ensure that our school leaders fulfil their expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge and help to focus our improvement efforts where needed most
- Ensure all our school staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools

### References

The Education Act 1996, 2002 & 2011

Working together to improve school attendance (Guidance) May 2022

Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance 2018,

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010, 2011, 2013 & 2016

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007, 2012 & 2013

Children Act 1989 & 2004

## People with responsibility for attendance matters in our school

Designated Senior Leader: AM McElhinney Tel:01733 566005 Email: [office@st-thomasmoreprimary.com](mailto:office@st-thomasmoreprimary.com)

Attendance Officer: Mrs J Smee Tel: 01733 5005 Email: [office@st-thomasmoreprimary.com](mailto:office@st-thomasmoreprimary.com)

### Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote good school attendance.

Equally, parents/carers have a legal duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

**Declaration of acceptance by parents/carers.**

I/We have read and understood the terms and conditions of the attendance policy at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School.

Full Name of parent/carer (PRINT)\_\_\_\_\_

Signed Parent/carer 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of parent/carer (PRINT)\_\_\_\_\_

Signed parent/carer 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_