



St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Being the best that we can be



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy compiled by:

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Headteacher

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

God's love is at the heart of our Catholic School family.

We show this in our respect, kindness and love for others and by treating other people as we wish to be treated ourselves.

We will encourage everyone to be the best that we can be.

OUR SCHOOL AIMS

To guide our children to grow in the love of God and build relationships that will enable them to make a positive contribution to the school and society.

To develop an exciting, challenging and creative curriculum that produces confident and successful learners who are the best that they can be.

To develop high quality learning that enables every child to flourish, to discover their talents and be lifelong learners.

To establish a teaching and learning environment that encourages everyone to enjoy, to achieve, to be inclusive, to be healthy, and to stay safe.

To nurture a strong partnership between home and school.

To have respect and understanding for our school, our community and our world, helping our children to become responsible citizens and good role models.

OUR SHARED VISION

Every child at St Thomas of Canterbury is special and will achieve their full potential academically, socially, spiritually and emotionally through the provision of a loving community and rich and varied learning opportunities and the highest quality teaching and learning.

Every staff member at St Thomas of Canterbury will feel valued and enabled to provide the opportunities that we want for our children and to do so as part of a loving community which has the highest expectations of and for all.

Every Governor at St Thomas of Canterbury will feel valued and enabled to act as a critical friend to the School and to be accountable for the School's strategy. They will play a visible role supporting all children, their parents and staff at School and in the wider community, to provide the best environment possible for learning and spiritual growth.



OUR GOLDEN RULE

We treat others as we would like to be treated

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Introduction

The staff of St Thomas of Canterbury School are committed, in partnership with the parents, pupils, governors, Xavier CET and the Local Education Authority, to building a school which serves the community commendably, and of which the community is proud.

The school staff firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. To this end we will do all we can to encourage parents/carers to ensure that the children in their care achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent full attendance are identified and acted on promptly.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness 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:

- Holidays in term time.
- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily (i.e. birthday treat, shopping trip etc.)
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school very late without good cause (very late 45 minutes after the session begins).

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school regularly;
- attend school punctually;
- attend school appropriately prepared for the day;
- discuss promptly with their class teacher, any problems that deter them from attending school.

We expect that all parents/carers/persons who have day to day responsibility for the children and young people will:

- encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day;
- ensure that they contact the school whenever the child/children is unable to attend school;
- contact the school on the first day of the child's absence and send a note on their return to school;
- contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

NB The School can be contacted on 01483 888388 to report absences, an ansaphone service operates outside of office hours.



We expect that school staff will:

- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, at least twice daily;
- monitor every pupil's attendance;
- contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes authorising the absence,
- encourage good attendance
- provide a welcoming atmosphere for children; provide a safe learning environment;
- provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns
- make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the LEA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance;
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Local Authority's Inclusion team;
- meet, where possible, the requirements of the UN Convention - The Rights Of The Child, by ensuring that children are consulted in all decisions that relate to them.

Encouraging Good Attendance

St Thomas of Canterbury School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- by providing a positive, supportive, caring and welcoming learning environment;
- by responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils;
- by marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration. If pupils arrive at school after the close of the register without a written explanation, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the pupil's name recorded on the entry system in case of a fire drill;
- by celebrating good and improved attendance;
- by monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Inclusion Officer if the irregular attendance continues.
- in very exceptional circumstances the school may consider the use of a Penalty Notice (please see the attached appendix for further information).

Registration and Punctuality

Punctuality to school is crucial and registration at the beginning of the day with the class teacher is one of the most important periods in the day. Lateness to school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other children in the class. It is paramount therefore that all children arrive at school on time.

- School opens at 8.30am and registration takes place at 8:50am.
- Pupils who arrive after 9.00am will be recorded as late to school.
- If a child arrives at school after 9.00am they must sign in to the registration system at the School Office to ensure their presence on site is noted, particularly in case of a fire drill or emergency.
- Morning registration will officially close at 9:20am. If a pupil arrives after this time without an authorised reason, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority.
- Afternoon registration is taken at 1.00pm for EYFS and KS1 pupils and by 1.30pm for KS2 pupils.

Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern further action will be taken. This may involve contacting the appropriate authority outside the school.



The Attendance Officer will monitor lateness on a weekly basis and if a child is regularly late a letter will be sent to the parent/carer. If the child continues to be late, an appointment will be made with the parent/carer and Headteacher in order to agree a way forward. If there is a negative response or little or no improvement after discussions about attendance or lateness, a referral will be made to the Inclusion Officer.

End of School day

The School day ends at 3:20pm each day (currently 3.10pm for EYFS and KS1 children as a precaution on crowding following the COVID pandemic) and children should be collected promptly by a parent or carer at that time. If a parent/carer is delayed the child will remain with their teacher until 3.25 and will then be taken to wait at the school office.

No pupil may leave the School site at the end of the School day unless collected by their parent/carer except in the case of a Year 6 child whose parents have given written permission for their child to leave the school unaccompanied.

If someone other than the child's parent is collecting a child the School must be informed in writing of who is collecting the child.

Types of absence

There are several types of absence:

Persistent absence - missing more than 10% of possible attendances in any one term. Levels of attendance falling below 90% will be regarded by the school as causing concern and will trigger school-based intervention.

Intermittent absence - missing days or half days in succeeding weeks, whether in a regular or irregular pattern, totalling a considerable number of absences over a half term or term.

Absconding - when a pupil leaves the school premises having been registered as present.

Authorised - the school approves the absence for a valid reason, for example, genuine illness or death in a family. Medical appointments should, if possible, be arranged outside the school day but where this is not possible it is expected pupils only miss part of the school day – these absences are generally authorised.

Unauthorised - the school does not approve the absence.

Leave of Absence

Holidays

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 the lessons on their return. There is consequent risk of underachievement, which must be avoided.

The School holiday dates are published up to a year in advance and we expect parents and carers to book their family holidays during the school holidays. Parents should not book a family holiday during term time.

Parents do not have the right to take their child for such a holiday and the school will not authorise such an absence. In exceptional circumstances where there is a serious domestic reason to take a child out of school, e.g. to attend a family funeral, permission should be sought from the Headteacher.



Such a request must be made in writing to the Headteacher as far in advance of the requested dates as possible. The Head Teacher will then decide whether or not to authorise the absences.

Appointments during the school day

To encourage good attendance, parents and carers should try, whenever possible, to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time. Requests for any unavoidable planned absences must be made in writing giving the reason for the planned absence, the time of leaving and of return. Children are not permitted to leave the premises without prior permission from the School and must be collected by parents or such persons as the parents have authorised the School in writing to release the child(ren) to. The parents or authorised adult must sign out the child(ren) on leaving the School and sign them back in upon their return.

Parents and carers should make every reasonable effort to bring the child in to School before an appointment and return them to the School after the appointment.

Approval

The Headteacher will decide whether or not to authorise a request for absence having considered:

- the child's record of attendance;
- whether it is an exceptional circumstance;
- the time of the absence, ensuring that it would not prevent the child from missing any important examinations/assessments.

Absence will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, which may include compassionate grounds such as attendance at a funeral, a wedding of a very close family member, a medical appointment or for education or sporting activity off site. It is important for school staff to demonstrate empathy with families.

Where absence is requested on compassionate grounds, parents will need to write to the Headteacher explaining the reason for the absence and the date/s requested. Absence will only be authorised for the purpose stated, e.g., for a wedding, only for the day of the ceremony plus time for travel. An event associated with compassionate leave cannot be combined with a holiday.

Absence for a medical appointment may be arranged through the school office. Provision of an appointment card or letter is advisable and may be required where attendance rates are of concern.

Absence for Education off site such as a visit to a new school may be organised through the school office.

Where a child is taking part in an educational activity such as a drama production then absence will only be authorised for a reasonable absence and via a licence obtained through the local authority.

Should unauthorised absence become a concern the Governors will be obliged to consider such absence as serious and with the Headteacher and Inclusion Officer will consider all options including requesting the Local authority to issue a Penalty Notice.

In the event of a holiday taken in term time during SATs without the express agreement of the school, the Headteacher will immediately request the LA to issue a Penalty Notice.

Responding To Non-Attendance

Parents/carers must contact the School on the first day of absence, to explain their child's absence, and when they anticipate their child will return to school. The school operates an ansaphone service



out of hours for this purpose 01483 888388. Otherwise an email can be sent to: info@st-thomas.surrey.sch.uk

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call has been received from the parent/carer by 10 a.m. the school will endeavour to contact them that day by phone and email.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If by the end of the second day, there has still been no contact made, the school will alert the local authority and police as appropriate and send a letter of concern to parents/carers or invite them into school to discuss their concerns. The school will tell parents that if the absence persists that a referral will be made to the Inclusion Officer.
- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the Inclusion Officer may result in further action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

Changing schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school that they inform St Thomas of Canterbury school staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- the date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- the address of the new school;
- the new home address, if it is known.

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Inclusion Officer.

School Organisation

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the School has the following responsibilities:

Head Teacher, Governors and designated member of school staff with overall responsibility for attendance to:

- adopt the whole policy;
- ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided;
- initiate a scheme for contacting parents on the first day of absence;
- consult and liaise closely with the Inclusion Officer on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay;
- to work in close collaboration with the Inclusion Officer during their termly/half termly register analysis;
- monitor and evaluate attendance with the Inclusion Officer.

Headteacher:

- to oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually;
- to liaise with the Inclusion Officer regularly;



- to reinforce good practice;
- to share the class teacher's concerns regarding the early identification of disaffection with the Inclusion Officer.

Class teachers:

- to complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily;
- to follow up any unexplained non-attendance;
- to record all reasons for absences in the register;
- to inform the Headteacher of concerns;
- to be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to the Headteacher.

This policy of St Thomas of Canterbury School upholds the school's ethos and Mission Statement. It must be read in conjunction with and implemented in accordance to the school's policies for Health & Safety Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Safeguarding. Copies of these policies are available from the school office website.