



St. Matthew's

Church of England Primary School

Reviewed: September 2021
Next Review: September 2022

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Vision	Core Values The way we do things around here
Outstanding in everything we do	We aim high - We are aspirational for our children, our school and ourselves
Mission The St. Matthew's Way	We encourage - We build people up, we recognise the value of the whole school family
High educational expectations within a caring Christian Community so our children have successful futures.	We have faith - We have the courage to take risks and try new things knowing that this is a safe place and we have faith that God has great plans for our school and the individuals in it We do all this in a culture of respect

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School Attendance Strategy

A great day every day

Attendance is a key focus for our school.

100% is the expected attendance at school; 95% is the minimum acceptable.

In order to improve attendance and punctuality, and to raise pupils' attainment, the school is taking a new approach to addressing absence and persistent absence.

Persistent absence and poor punctuality affects your child's achievements and opportunities now and in the future (see Appendix 1) From September 2018 we have a new attendance strategy to:

- Support parents to achieve better attendance for their children
- Support children to achieve well following absence
- Prevent future absence once a child has returned to school

We are delighted to have appointed Mrs Catharine Adjei to a new position of Children, Families and Learning Support Worker at St Matthew's School. Part of Mrs Adjei's role will be to work with parents to identify reasons for children's absence and to put in place effective actions to improve children's attendance at school.

Where attendance does not improve, referrals will be made to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). The EWO is an officer of Surrey County Council with a statutory duty to enforce good attendance. Fixed penalty notices (fines) can be issued if persistent absence continues or if more than four consecutive unauthorised absence occurs. The school will also be running Attendance Awareness courses to which parents of persistent absentees will be invited. Co-operation in attending an Attendance Awareness course will enable you to avoid having to pay a fixed penalty notice.

We love having your children in school and so we make time every week to celebrate attendance in Collective Worship (assembly). We share class attendance figures with the children, give out stickers and certificates for 100% attendance and enter all of those children with 100% attendance into our termly attendance prize draw. The more weeks you have 100% attendance, the more times you get your name entered into the prize draw, the more chance you have of winning a state of the art bike from Finch Cycles in Reigate.

We look forward to seeing an improvement in attendance.

If you require support in getting your child to school on time each day please contact Mrs Adjei via the school office who will be happy to put a plan in place to ensure your child attends school, arriving on time, every day.

Mrs J Lightfoot
Headteacher

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

At St Matthew's School, the school day starts at 8.50am until 3.15pm Monday to

Attendance	Description	Approx. days lost per year	Approx. weeks lost per year
98-100%	Excellent	0-4	Less than 1
96-98%	Good	5-9	1-2
95-96%	Satisfactory	10-13	2-3
90-95%	Unsatisfactory	14-18	3-4
Below 90%	Persistent Absence	More than 19 Equivalent to 38 sessions	More than 4

Friday.

Morning registration is at 8.50am and afternoon registration at 1.00pm for KS1 / 1.15pm KS2.

Registers close at 9.00 am each morning.

Good attendance at school is everybody's responsibility: staff, parents, pupils (See Appendix 2 & Appendix 3 for further information on roles in supporting and enforcing good attendance).

St Matthew's Primary School recognises that regular attendance and punctuality is not just a legal requirement but a key factor in raising educational standards. Where the words regular and regularly are used in this policy, it refers to a minimum attendance of 95% or better. The attendance target set for the school is 97%. Our expectations on attendance and punctuality are in the best interests of the pupils. Parental support where attendance is concerned is paramount.

Staff that may contact you with regard to attendance are: Attendance Officer, Children, Families and Learning Support Worker and in extreme circumstances a member of the Senior Leadership Team or Headteacher.

1. Legal Framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

- The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable:
 - a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
 - b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A person begins to be of compulsory school age:
 - a) when they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
 - b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.
- A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year:

- a) if they attain the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
- b) if they attain that age on that day, or
- c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following their attaining that age.

St Matthew's Primary School is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance and punctuality policy accordingly.

2. Absences

All pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a valid reason not to attend.

There are two types of absences:

1. Authorised (where St Matthew's Primary School approves a pupil's absence)
2. Unauthorised (where St Matthew's Primary School does not approve a pupil's absence)

2.1 Authorised Absence

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to authorise any child's absence from school. Therefore, absences will be treated as unauthorised until the school is satisfied that it should be authorised. ***Parents/carers cannot authorise absences and should be aware that while calling the school or providing a note for an absence complies with safeguarding procedures, it does not automatically mean an absence will be authorised.***

The Attendance Officer, Children, Families and Learning Support Worker or Headteacher or any school staff need not accept a parental explanation of a child's absence, whether written, telephoned or given in person if they are in any doubt about the explanation. It is for St Matthew's Primary School to judge whether the explanation given satisfactorily justifies the absence and may seek advice from the Education Welfare Officer who visits the school once a month.

2.2 Examples of Authorised Absence

Authorised absences are those which St Matthew's Primary School considers reasonable and may include:

- Genuine, significant illness
- Urgent appointments for the pupil which cannot be made outside school hours
- Major religious observations
- Visits to prospective new schools
- External exams or educational assessments
- Exclusions.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Medical appointments are recorded as authorised absences with evidence of correspondence from the doctor/hospital. Whenever possible, medical appointments should be made outside school hours. Where this does not happen, children should attend school for as much of the day as possible.

For illnesses of more than three days a medical certificate/doctor's note or proof of medication should be presented.

A child may be absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith. However, notice is required in writing for such absences.

2.3 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences are those which do not fall into the authorised examples listed in the previous section.

Unauthorised absence can lead to St Matthew's Primary School using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily. This may include looking after brothers or sisters or ill relatives, attending appointments with parents/family members or caring for a disabled parent
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Shopping or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

Persistent absence is referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). The EWO is an officer of Surrey County Council with a statutory duty to enforce good attendance. Attendance data will be shared with the EWO as appropriate.

3. Term Time Leave

Request for Leave of Absence during term time must be made in advance (14 days notice where possible). Requests must be made to the Headteacher using the Leave of Absence due to Exceptional Circumstances form (Appendix 4.)

St Matthew's Primary School will not authorise leave of absence for holidays during term time. Parents/carers do not have this right therefore holidays must be taken during school holiday periods.

3.1 Exceptional Circumstances

The Headteacher can only give permission for term time leave in exceptional circumstances.

Please note that in exceptional circumstances, where a request is made and is authorised, it will only be on the understanding that the following evidence may be requested and, where requested, is provided:

- Any required trip abroad – proof of flight details, including a proposed date of return. If flights have to be changed by an airline which directly affect the return date, then proof of this will also be required.

A request for term time leave should be made using the request form to the Headteacher 14 days prior to the intended absence and a decision will be made based on individual circumstances. (The request form can be collected from the school office.) **St Matthew's Primary School will not authorise any exceptional leave in the month of May as this is a crucial time for school examinations.**

Failure to notify St Matthew's Primary School of a reason for absence will result in the matter being passed to the Education Welfare Officer which may lead to a request for a fixed penalty notice of £60.00 per parent/carer per child

Fixed penalty notices will be issued where more than four consecutive days unauthorised absence has occurred and parents have refused to attend the school's Attendance Awareness Course.

4. Fixed Penalty Notices

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 states that Penalty Notices can be issued for cases of unauthorised absence from school. Section 23 of the Act empowers designated Local Authority Officers, Headteachers (including Deputy and Assistant Heads if nominated by them), and the Police to issue the aforementioned Penalty Notices. Surrey LA has the primary responsibility for producing the overseeing Penalty Notice Code of Conduct and ensuring consultation takes place with governing bodies, Headteachers and chief officer of police, in adopting the code. The education-related aspects of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 apply to all parents who fall within the definition of Section 576 of the Education Act 1996.

4.1 Cases where issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice will be considered

- * Persistent Absence – this is defined as parents of pupils with less than 90% attendance during any half-term, term or across a school year.
- * Parents of pupils who have more than four consecutive days of unauthorised absence.
- * Parents of pupils who refused to attend the school's Attendance Awareness Course.

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.

4.2 Payment

- A Penalty Notice shall be for the sum of £60 if paid within 21 days rising to £120 thereafter until the final deadline of 28 days.
- Part Payments or Payment plans are not acceptable and fines must be paid in full within 21/28 days.
- Payment in full of the Fixed Penalty Notice discharges the parent's legal responsibility for the period of unauthorised absence outlined in the Notice and the parent cannot be subsequently prosecuted for that period. Enforcing Attendance Regular attendance at school is a legal requirement and Section 444 (1) and 444 (1A) of the Education Act 1996 and Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 already exist to enforce attendance through the Courts in appropriate circumstances.

The legal responsibility for compliance with these Acts rests with the parents and courts have the powers to fine, imprison or impose various orders.

5. Attendance Policy during severe weather and school closure

St Matthew's Primary School always endeavours to remain open and parents and pupils should make every effort to attend school.

Up to date information will be posted on our website, local radio and school answer phone.

On mornings where there is heavy snow or travelling conditions are hazardous, registers will not be closed until 9.30 am.

6. Attendance Procedures

During every day of unplanned absence (eg not a scheduled operation) the parent/carer should telephone the office to inform St Matthew's Primary School of the reason for the child's absence. All telephone calls are logged. St Matthew's Primary School will then decide whether to authorise the absence.

The amount of absence will be logged and an attendance report given to parents at each termly parents evening.

If a pupil is absent with no explanation from the parent/carer, the Attendance Officer will telephone on the morning of the first day asking for a reason for the absence. Telephone calls are logged. Follow up contact is made the next day if the pupil is still absent with explanation. If the unexplained absence continues, the Education Welfare Officer is contacted to possibly do a home visit.

If a child's attendance falls below 90%, this is classified as Persistent Absence. A referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer and legal action may be pursued for poor attendance.

7 Sharing Attendance Data

7.1 Pupils

Pupils are informed on a weekly basis of attendance/punctuality achievements in Collective Worship and via Headlines newsletter. Classes with the best attendance are rewarded as are children with excellent attendance. This develops healthy competition between year groups to improve attendance. It also engages the class teacher in conversations with their class about attendance.

All children with 100% attendance each week are entered into our termly attendance prize draw. The more weeks you have 100% attendance, the more times you get your name entered into the prize draw, the more chance you have of winning a prize eg a new bicycle.

7.2 Communicating attendance with parents

Parents receive a green, amber or red attendance certificate each half term to share their child's attendance figures. In cases of high absence, parents will also receive a letter outlining the schools concerns and suggested next steps.

7.3 Parents evenings

This provides an opportunity for class teachers to praise and recognise excellent attendance or share attendance concerns and discuss barriers to good attendance. Where necessary, parents may be referred to the school's Children, Families and Learning Support Worker to discuss how we can help support good attendance.

8 Children Missing Education

Schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days the pupil can be removed from the admission register when under regulation 8(1), paragraph (f)(iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 16

Under regulation 8(1), paragraph (h)(iii) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 9.

This occurs after the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

8.1 Making reasonable enquiries about Children Missing Education

These include:

- Making contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details
- Checking local databases within the local authority
- Use of Key to Success or school2school (s2s) systems
- Contacting other agencies e.g. those of housing providers, school admissions, health services, police, refuge, Youth Justice Services, children's social care, and HMRC
- Checking with agencies known to be involved with family
- Checking with local authority and school from which child may have moved to or from
- Making referrals to other agencies where St Matthew's School have reasons to be concerned about the safety and welfare of a pupil.

8.2 Exclusions

St Matthew's School is also responsible for arranging full-time education for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed period exclusion.

9 Punctuality

9.1 School times

Usual schools times are 8.50am – 3.15pm – see Appendix 6 for timings as at September 2021

St Matthew's Primary School actively discourages lateness and will monitor patterns of recurrent lateness which could provide grounds for prosecution. All late pupils arriving after close of registers (and their parents, if parents are bringing their children to school) must report to the office to complete the late book. The time of arrival and a reason for the lateness will be recorded.

Usually, Registration takes place at 8.50am promptly -see Appendix 6 for timings as at September 2021

Pupils who are late disrupt their own education and that of others. Recurrent patterns of lateness or persistent lateness can be construed as non-attendance and may warrant intervention by the of Children, Families and Learning Support Worker and/or Education Welfare Officer. Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child arrives on time for school and have a responsibility to their children to ensure they get the best start to a school day by at least being on time.



The impact of poor attendance and punctuality

Research shows that children who attend school regularly are likely to be more successful – in school and in their adult life.

Being frequently late for school adds up to lost learning:

- Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 days lost each year.
- Arriving 15 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 2 weeks a year.
- Arriving 30 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 19 days a year.

19 days lost a year through being late = 90% attendance = Persistent Absence.

Some strategies to support improving punctuality

Night time routines

- Encouraging children to pack their school bag before going to bed, ready for the next day.
- Getting to bed earlier.
- Setting a time for a television, iPad, computer, mobile phone and other devices to be turned off.

Morning routines

- Setting the alarm for a time that allows all morning routines to be carried out without making them late for school.
- Having breakfast before leaving home, so there is no need to call in at the shop on the way to school.
- Encouraging children to leave home at least five minutes earlier than they think they need to.
- Meeting a reliable friend to walk to school with.
- Coming to school for breakfast club.

Did you know..?

Children spend only 190 days out of 365 days in school.

There is never a good time to take children away from their lessons especially:

- When children have important tests to complete
- When they move from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2
- When they move from primary to secondary school
- As it can affect their friendships

It is not true ...

- That they catch up. Research shows that by missing lessons, pupils soon fall behind. Lessons they miss are **not** repeated at a later date.
- That you automatically have 5 days extra school holiday each year. Schools are quite within their rights to refuse to authorise applications.
- That for younger children, lost schooling does not matter. It is just the opposite!

Every School Day Counts – Always

Stop and think what it will cost your child



The role of parents and pupils in supporting attendance St Matthew's Primary School. Every day a great day!

In line with our Home School Agreement (Appendix 5)

All parents must:

- Notify the school by telephone on the first day that their child is unavailable to attend school.
- Avoid making medical/dental appointments during the school day.
- Not take their child on holiday in term time and in the case of exceptional circumstances permission must be granted by the Headteacher. The Request for Leave of Absence due to Exceptional Circumstances is available from the school office.
- Promote the value of excellent attendance at home and follow the procedures set by the school.
- Advise the school of any difficulties the child may be having so that the school can support as appropriate.
- Be aware that Section 444 of the Education Act states, *'If a pupil of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.'*

All pupils must:

- Do their best to make sure they are in school every day, on time, ready to learn.
- On those occasions that they return to school from a period of absence, meet with the Children, Families and Learning Support Worker to catch up on missed learning.
- Inform a member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties with their attendance, who will decide on the appropriate support or may refer the family to Children, Families and Learning Support Worker.



Enforcing the Attendance Policy

Local Governing Body

As part of the whole school approach to maintaining high attendance, the Local Governing Body will:

- Ensure that attendance is given a high priority and will annually review the school's Attendance Policy.
- Ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date information is provided to families.
- Agree with the school, the appropriate and accurate attendance figures and also agree the targets that will be submitted to the borough.
- Once a term, at governors meetings, allow the time to discuss attendance issues and ways that they can support the school as necessary.

School Leadership Team

As part of our whole school approach to maintaining high attendance, the School Leadership Team will:

- Ensure that attendance is given the highest priority and ensure that each member of staff is active in their approach to promoting good attendance with their pupils and parents/carers.
- Ensure that school policy is administered, and that the school's systems to promote good attendance are adhered to and are consistently implemented.
- Ensure that the data is analysed to identify whole school, year group, class and pupil issues as soon as possible and implement the appropriate interventions and support.
- Provide the data for the governing body once a half term.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.
- Develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their pupil to attend.
- Document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their pupil's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Employ a Children, Families and Learning Support Worker to support the implementation of our attendance policy.

The Education Welfare Officer

- Parents 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 Education Welfare Officer.
- The school can implement the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice with a fine of £60 per pupil per parent.
- Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO to ask for help or information.



St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Request for a Leave of Absence due to Exceptional Circumstances

Child's full name	
Class	
Name of parent / carer making the application	

Please detail the name, school and year group of any other children you have requested authorisation for	
Date of application to other school(s)	

Dates of leave requested Please include full or part days eg midday 12/7/19 returning 16/7/19	
Please outline the exceptional circumstances for your child / yourself which have led to this application for absence Please explain why it is impossible to avoid this absence for your child at this time, including why there are no suitable times outside school hours or within any of the school holidays	

We seek to respond to applications within five working days. Please remember that we must have sufficient notice to consider applications. Absences taken without prior authorisation cannot be authorised after the event.

By signing this application, you confirm that you have read the summary policy overleaf and understand that it is highly unlikely that leave will be granted. A fixed penalty notice may be issued should pupils be absent from school without authorisation:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Headteacher's decision

Current attendance	Attendance previous year	Prior leave this year
Authorised	Not Authorised	Further information required
Reason for the decision		
Headteacher _____		



St Matthew's Church of England Primary School Request for a Leave of Absence Policy Summary

1. Attendance and The Law

The law regarding authorised pupil absence states it is no longer possible to routinely authorise absence from school. Please read this policy summary to ensure you understand the law before requesting permission to take your child out of school. **You are highly unlikely to be granted authorisation for leave of absence.**

The law about pupil attendance is found in The Education Act 1996 – sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) AND 458(4)&(5), together with The Education Regulations (England) 2006, 2010, 2011, 2013.

St Matthew's Primary School will not authorise leave of absence for holidays during term time. Parents/carers do not have this right therefore holidays must be taken during school holiday periods.

2. Accepted absence

All pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is an acceptable reason.

Authorised absences are those which St Matthew's Primary School considers reasonable and may include:

- Genuine, significant illness
- Urgent appointments for the pupil which cannot be made outside school hours
- Major religious observations
- Visits to prospective new schools
- External exams or educational assessments
- Exclusions.

3. Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances

The Headteacher can only give permission for term time leave in exceptional circumstances. There must be a very strong case as to why it is impossible to avoid this absence for your child at this time and why there are no suitable times outside school hours or within any of the school holidays.

Please note that in exceptional circumstance, where a request is made and is authorised, it will only be on the understanding that supporting evidence may be requested and must be provided.

Failure to notify St Matthew's Primary School of a reason for absence will result in the matter being passed to the Education Welfare Officer which may lead to a request for a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60.00 per parent/carer per child.

4. Decisions of whether to grant leave of absence

Each application for leave of absence is individual and it is for the Headteacher to come to a decision.

Should you wish not to accept the decision, you may appeal to the governors in writing. You should do this within 10 days of receipt of the school's decision.



Home School Agreement

Working together for the benefit of each child

As set out in the Mission Statement, Christian values are at the heart of all that we do. At St. Matthew's Primary School we believe that successful partnerships between the school, the church, the parents and the children will help each pupil to take full advantage of all the school has to offer. The agreement supports this partnership in the interests of our children.

TOGETHER WE WILL

- Promote high standards of learning and behaviour.
- Have high expectations of the attainment and progress of all children.
- Support the values and activities of the school.
- Enable children to initiate their own independent learning.
- Establish good habits of behaviour for learning.

AS A SCHOOL WE WILL

- Provide a broad curriculum to accelerate pupils' learning.
- Provide learning opportunities matched to children's ages and abilities which ensure they make good progress and achieve well.
- Keep parents informed about their children's learning, progress and attainment and how parents can support their children.
- Meet with parents at parents' meetings (at least termly) to discuss children's progress. An annual report is sent home at the end of the summer term.
- Ensure positive behaviour for learning in lessons and playtimes.
- Encourage and celebrate children's achievements.
- Discuss with parents any concerns about work, behaviour, attendance or punctuality which may affect their child's progress and implement actions for improvement, involving other agencies as necessary.
- Ensure effective communication between home and school to support children's learning.

AS PARENTS I / WE WILL

- Inform the school about any home situations that may affect my child's learning.
- Let the school know of any concerns about my child's learning and/or well-being.
- Attend parents' evenings to review and support my child's progress.
- Ensure that home learning tasks (eg reading, learning spellings and times tables) are completed as required.
- Support the school's rules, expectations and policies.
- Encourage and celebrate my child's achievements.
- Support my child's learning and encourage and help them to do their best.
- Ensure that my child attends school every day, arriving on time and with the required equipment and uniform.
- Notify the school of the reason for my child's absence from school.
- Help to keep the school a safe and caring environment.
- Encourage my child to take part in the full life of the school.
- Ensure effective communication between home and school to support my child's learning.

THE CHILD WILL

- Attend school every day, arriving on time for lessons.
- Bring to school all the equipment she/he needs for lessons.
- Wear the correct school uniform and be tidy in appearance.
- Have high aspirations and expectations of their own learning, behaviour and achievement.
- Have a sense of pride in their achievements.
- Complete home learning tasks on time.
- Follow the five golden rules.
- Leave valuables at home (e.g. money, jewellery, toys, electronic games)

(Some parents of children who travel unaccompanied to/from school may prefer their child to have a mobile telephone. In this instance telephones must be kept in the school office during the day.)

Appendix 6

School day times & gates September 2021

Reception, Years 1, 2, & 3

8:50am – 3:00pm

Years 4, 5, 6 & Sun Class

8:30am – 2:40pm

Nursery

8.50am - 11.50am & 12.15pm - 3.15pm