

Attendance Policy

2025-2027



Mission Statement

Guided by truth, respect and compassion; we share in building upon every individual's foundation, nurturing a love of learning in preparation for tomorrow's society, with Jesus at the heart of all we do.

Governing Body with Responsibility	Safeguarding, Community, Admissions & Ethos Committee
Agreed by Governors on	May 2025
Chair's Signature	
Staff Member Responsible for Review	L Dolan-Walsh
Date for Review	May 2027

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Aims
3. Legislation and Guidance
4. Roles and Responsibilities
5. Recording Attendance
6. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence
7. Attendance Monitoring
8. Promoting Attendance
9. Monitoring Arrangements
10. Links with Other Policies

1. Introduction

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, we believe a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance, and the link that this has to achievement and attainment as well as social and emotional development.

2. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance and punctuality
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

3. Legislation and Guidance

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](#)

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The Governing Board

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
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

4.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

4.3 The Attendance Officer

The attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

4.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, ensuring electronic registers are completed and saved by 9:00 am and immediately after children return to class from lunchtime.

4.5 School Office Staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record on registers.
- Organise first day calling/texts and record on registers.

4.6 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9.00am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- 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.
- Provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen. Whenever possible all appointments should be made outside of school hours.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Let the School know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down; if an urgent appointment has been made.
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child, aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Provide written explanations of any absence and medical evidence for whole day appointments as well as medical evidence for persistent absence from school due to alleged illness.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the Head Teacher creates an offence in law.

4.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to attend school every day on time.

5. Recording Attendance

5.1 Attendance Register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and immediately after lunch for the pm session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present

- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- Any amendment to the attendance register will include:
 - The original entry
 - The amended entry
 - The reason for the amendment
 - The date on which the amendment was made
 - The name and position of the person who made the amendment
 - See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.30. The register for the second session will be taken immediately after children return from lunch and kept open for 10 minutes.

5.2 Unplanned Absence

Parents/carers must notify the school of the reason for absence on the first day of any unplanned absence, by 9:30am or as soon as practically possible. Parents/carers can email the school office: school@sacredheart.merton.sch.uk, leave a message on the absence line by pressing extension 1 or speak directly to a member of staff.

5.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents should telephone or come into the school office to give details in advance of the appointment and will be advised that usually only a half day absence will be authorised and pupils should be in school before or after the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

5.4 Understanding Types of Absence Coding

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the School as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED and it is the Headteacher who decides whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays

- Minding other younger children in the family
- Sibling unwell
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Headteacher
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (After the close of registration)
- Truancy
- Death of a pet

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa, if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school, there is evidence they have been on holiday.

5.5 Suspension from School

With effect from the 1st September 2022, any pupil who has been suspended from school, and provision arranged, if the student does not attend the provision this shall be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may result in further action taken by the school.

5.6 Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Ongoing punctuality issues will be identified by the school attendance officer who will liaise with parents, senior staff in school and the Education Welfare Officer

5.7 Following Up Unexplained Absences

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call and/or text the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family. In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be made, either by senior leaders or the School Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the safety and well-being of the child. The Headteacher will also take advice from the Merton Early Help Hub.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will involve the Education Welfare Officer

Once contact has been made, school will identify whether the absence is approved or not identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained.

Parenting Contracts

A Parenting Contract may be offered to support an improvement in attendance, and is a written agreement between the relevant parties, that may include the School, Parent(s), Pupil(s), and School's Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Parenting Contracts should be in place for a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 12 months. The aim is to offer support by listening to the reasons for absence and difficulties that prevent regular school attendance during a meeting with the Parents, Child, School staff and EWO where realistic achievable targets can be set. If there is no improvement against the targets set after 4 weeks the Parenting Contract can close.

Ten Days' Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing education (CME). The Education Welfare Officer will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Children Missing from Education (CME)

If a pupil moves out of the area or abroad the parents must complete a school leavers form, available from the school office. This will provide the pupil's new home address, potentially their new school name and contact details and contact information for their parents/carers. If no/insufficient detail is provided to the school, the pupil will be referred to the Local Authority as a Child Missing from Education and the Local Authority will need to make appropriate checks.

Ensuring a Good Education for Children Who Cannot Attend School Because of Health Needs

The school will provide (e.g. via google classroom) and/or will work together with the local authority and other relevant professionals to ensure any child who is going to be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons either consecutively or accumulatively, will have access to relevant and appropriate education. This includes Public Exam provision and the education of siblings where the family have had to travel and stay away from the home for medical reasons.

5.8 Part-time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. ([Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)).

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision.

There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised and code in the register as a C, which is an authorised absence.

5.9 Reporting to Parents/Carers

The school will inform parents annually about their child's attendance and absence levels by sending out an attendance sheet with annual reports in the summer term. Where attendance is identified as an issue, parents will be informed by letter and may be invited into a meeting with the Attendance Officer and/or Headteacher and/or Education Welfare Officer.

6. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

6.1 Approval for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion and if it is granted the Head will also determine the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent. All requests for leave of absence in term time will be considered on their individual merits.

Reasons not deemed Exceptional include:

- Availability of cheap flights and/or holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Parent/carer work commitments unless there is clear evidence that the leave cannot be taken in school holiday times.
- Poor weather experienced during school holiday periods
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term, half term.

Any request should be submitted in writing as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, a minimum of 2 weeks before the absence, using the leave of absence request form (Appendix 2), accessible via the school office.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, barges (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

6.2 legal Sanctions

Any leave of absence that is not authorised is very likely to result in the issuing of Penalty Notice Fine by the London Borough of Merton, where the child is of compulsory school age.

The Fine, if issued is for £120, per parent per child. If paid within 21 days the fine is reduced to £60 per parent per child. In Merton Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority at the request of the School in line with the Code of Conduct.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the matter will usually proceed to the Magistrates Court under s4441 Education Act 1996. If convicted the Parent may face a fine of up to £1000 and will receive a criminal record.

We promote good attendance across the school by putting class attendance on the newsletter every week, celebrating termly attendance with awards in assembly and end of year attendance award

7. Attendance Monitoring

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

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.

7.1 Analysing Attendance Data

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 strategies to address these patterns

7.2 Using Data to Improve Attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.3 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
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school and 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 remove the barriers to attendance
- Monitor the pupil's attendance closely and work in partnership with parents/local services to increase attendance

8 Promoting Attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education.

8.1 Attendance Awards

- Certificates will be awarded in achievement assemblies to the class/es with the best attendance for a whole week.
- The Attendance Cup will be awarded each half term to the class with the highest attendance.

- Attendance Certificates will be awarded to all pupils who achieve 100% attendance for a whole term.
- Badges will be awarded to pupils with 100% attendance for the whole school year.

9 Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with Other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day



Request for Leave of Absence for exceptional circumstances during Term Time

It is not advisable to take your child/ren on a leave of absence during term time as this causes disruption to their education. Schools must follow the law in this regard and may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances if certain criteria are fulfilled.

The Pupil Registration Regulations (England) 2006 and the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- **Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances is authorised at the discretion of the Head teacher.** (This is **not an automatic right** of parents/guardians)
- You should not normally take your child(ren) on a leave of absence during the school term.
- **Please do not book your leave of absence until authority is given.**
- Each request for leave of absence will be considered individually, taking into account: the circumstances for the request, the supporting evidence provided, the overall attendance of your child(ren), your child’s stage of education and progress and where appropriate both internal and external examinations and assessments.
- If the absence is approved by the Headteacher you will be advised as to how many days, the Headteacher has approved for your child’s absence.
- If the school does not agree the absence and you take the leave without permission or your child is absent for more than the agreed number of days, the absence will be unauthorised.
- Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of the school may lead to your child(ren) being referred to the Education Welfare Service and the possibility of statutory action and a fine.

In order for your application for absence to be considered, please complete below:

Name(s) of Child(ren)
.....

Class(es)

Home address:
.....

Dates of absence: From: To:
.....

Reason for request (additional evidence is required):
.....
.....
.....
.....

Signed: Parent/Guardian
.....

Email address: Mobile phone number:
.....

Date form submitted:

The above request for leave of absence in term time for days has / has not been authorised.

If authorised, your child/ren should return to school on:

.....

Signed..... Designation: Headteacher / Attendance
Officer