

Attendance policy

Ss John Fisher & Thomas More RC High School



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1. Aims

The School will:

- Offer an environment for pupils in which they feel valued and safe
- Reward good attendance and punctuality in accordance with our Behaviour and Rewards policy.
- Be distinguished by our care for all students, meeting individual needs with fairness, understanding and justice.
- Provide an education which prepares our students, for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.
- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all students, parents, teachers and governors.
- Promote and further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Set targets for improvement to improve the attendance of the whole school and key target groups.
- Operate a robust absence management system.
- Work in partnership with local schools, other agencies, the LA and Court Officer within the guidelines issued by the DfE
- Ensure prosecution under section 444(1) and 444(1a) of the Education Act 1996, to enforce attendance at school, where appropriate.

2. Legislation and guidance

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

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

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

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Governors will:

- Agree targets for attendance at school.
- Participate in attendance panels with appropriate staff where necessary
- Support the school with intervention and action plans
- Receive termly reports on attendance and review the policy annually

3.2 The Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance

The Senior Leader will:

- Implement this policy at the school
- Monitor school-level absence data and report it to governors
- Support staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The attendance manager and attendance officer:

The school attendance team operates a robust absence management and intervention process,

The attendance team will:

- Effectively manage the day-to-day administration of attendance registers
- Monitor in school lesson attendance as necessary
- Monitor attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Report concerns about attendance to the Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance
- Take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.
- Manage the first day absence contact system via Synergy
- Follow up unexplained absences
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Record late arrivals after registers close at 9am daily
- Work closely with pastoral staff
- Generate and circulate effective reports to Form Tutors and Year Leaders to enable targeted intervention and support
- Facilitate attendance panel meetings where necessary
- Keep appropriate records
- Liaise with external agencies, the LA and the Court Officer when required
- Document and collate evidence for referrals to external agencies
- Maintain up-to-date fire registers
- Work with key stakeholders to tackle persistent absences
- Advise the Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Attend parents' evenings as required in order to raise awareness and importance of good attendance
- Inform the LA of any students leaving for home education, moving area or changing schools

3.4 Form Teachers

Form Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information via Synergy

Form Teachers will:

- Monitor the attendance and punctuality of the students in their form
- Liaise directly with the Attendance Officer when a pupil advises of an impending absence or produces a note to cover an absence
- Stress the importance of attendance in direct correlation to achievement
- Ensure the register is marked promptly and accurately
- Ensure that statutory registers close at 09.00 for the morning session. The tutor is responsible for late marks during the registration period. After this the child will have an unauthorised absence for the relevant session unless you provide a legitimate reason for the absence. In the morning, if your child arrives after 08:45 they are late and this will be recorded accordingly (see *punctuality section*)
- Use rewards and sanctions.

3.5 Teaching Staff

Teaching staff will:

- Ensure the register is marked promptly and accurately for every session.
- Ensure that statutory registers close at 14:00 for the afternoon session
- Ensure students arriving to lessons late are recorded correctly and the number of minutes late are noted in Synergy – (see *Punctuality section*)
- Note any changes in student attendance pattern during the day and inform the Attendance Manager of any unexplained absences from the lessons

3.6 Year Leaders

Year Leaders are part of the pastoral team and are responsible for tracking attendance across their year groups.

Year Leaders will:

- Assist with the tracking of pupils who do not arrive for admission or who go missing during the school year
- Link with the Attendance Officer in order to monitor attendance and punctuality of pupils in the year group, taking appropriate intervention steps to ensure that they are at the highest levels.
- Undertake home visits as appropriate in relation to attendance of pupils in the year group.
- Intervene with and assist families in relation to attendance/punctuality concerns
- Support and supervise, where necessary, late sanctions.
- Contact and meet with parents where attendance/punctuality is a concern
- Place students on report where lateness persists
- Action requests for Fixed Penalty Notices in liaison with the Attendance Team and SLT Lead

3.7 Parents/Carers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Attendance Policy
- Ensure children attend school regularly and punctually
- Contact school on first day of absence no later than 8.30 am
- Contact school before 8.45 am any unforeseeable reasons that a pupil is due to be late
- Maintain contact with school for continued absence
- Explain the reason for a child's absence on or before the child's return to school
- Provide a note if their child needs to leave school during the day for any reason, which must be endorsed by the form tutor and the attendance officer
- Provide a note on their return to school
- Contact school early where problems with attendance are emerging
- Support the school in intervention and action plans, including attendance meetings as required
- Not book a holiday during term time. Headteachers can no longer authorise leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances include: death in the family, attachment to armed forces and critical illness.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

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

We will take our attendance register during form time at the start of each school day at 8.45 am and once during Period 6 class time at 1.20 pm. It is vitally important that pupils are on time, to avoid a late mark. In the morning, a bell will signal at 8.40 as a five-minute warning. Pupils should start to make their way to forms at this point. Any student who arrives after 8.45 will be marked late in the register. The attendance register will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Late
- 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

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

School day and Registration

<u>School Day</u>		
Registration/Assembly	8.45-9.00	
Period 1	9.00-9.50	
Period 2	9.50-10.40	
Break	10.40-11.00	
Period 3	11.00-11.50	
Period 4	11.50-12.40	Key Stage 4 Lunch 11.50-12.30
Period 5	12.30-1.20	Key Stage 3 Lunch 12.40-1.20
Period 6	1.20-2.10	
Period 7	2.10-3.00	

4.2 Unplanned absence

- The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.30 am, or as soon as practically possible for the reason of the child's absence.
- Parents/carers can communicate reasons for absence by personal contact, e-mail, note or telephone message.
- Absence notes should be signed and dated by the Form Tutor. Written letters should be retained in the envelope provided and passed to the Attendance Manager
- Only the school, not parents, in the context of the law can approve absence.
- Parental contact on the first day of absence should be expected.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Unauthorised Absence

What Constitutes Unauthorised Absence?

- Truancy for the whole day, part of the day or individual lessons
- Absence which is condoned by the family without a valid reason
- Unexplained absence
- Any holiday absence or extended leave taken during term time from the school (this incurs a Fixed Penalty Notice)
- Continued persistent late arrival to school after other sanctions have been implemented – see above
- Medical appointments are only permitted for half a day

It is the school's decision whether or not to authorise any absence and we may request medical evidence before authorising absence for illness, particularly if a student has a low attendance record or is absent for a period of 5 days or more.

Where an unauthorised absence has been recorded the Attendance Manager will contact parents via Synergy informing them that this has happened and highlighting that further unauthorised absence could result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

In the case of a pattern of unauthorised absence developing, a face to face meeting with the Attendance Manager will be held with parents to inform them of the possible consequences and to engage the family in supporting the pupil in resolving any difficulties. If parents fail to attend the

meeting this would provide further evidence of lack of engagement and would not in any way hinder the process of referring the case to the Local Authority Court Officer.

Pupils who obtain more than 10 unauthorised absences (the equivalent of 5 full school days) in any term or 20 unauthorised absences (the equivalent of 10 full school days) over two consecutive terms will be subject to a Penalty Notice issued by the Local Authority. The Penalty Notice is designed to be an early intervention. A Penalty Notice will only be applied if the progress being made either by the pupil or their parents/carers is deemed unsatisfactory. Both parents/carers are liable to a fine even if parents are divorced or separated. Further details are available from school or Lancashire County Council (telephone number 01772 531263).

Persistent Absence

A student is classed as a persistent absentee when their attendance is 90% or less at any point during the academic year. Any absence, whether authorised or unauthorised is included in the figures. Students who are identified as a persistent absentee will be supported and challenged through the school's systems for addressing persistent absence.

From February 2004, the law gives powers to the school and other designated bodies to request Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecution when a parent is considered able but unwilling to ensure their child's attendance to school. When the school deems this appropriate, usually as a last resort, a fixed penalty or court summons may be issued to each parent/carer. Persistent absence figures have to be sent electronically to the Local Authority every half term.

Children Missing Education (CME)

School will notify Lancashire's Children Missing Education Team when students have missed 10 consecutive school days without permission (or sooner if school are aware that the student is not going to return eg moved out of area) via the CME referral form.

School will provide Lancashire's Children Missing Education Team (offroll@lancashire.gov.uk) with the relevant details where a student has been removed from roll and a start at a new school has been confirmed or where the CME Team has advised School that removal from roll is authorised.

4.3 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/carers can communicate reasons for planned absences by personal contact, e-mail, note or telephone message.

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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

Being on time for school and for lessons is an important signal that shows a student is ready and willing to engage in their learning. The school has an attendance and pastoral team that deals with students and their families in order to improve punctuality.

Lateness to school will incur sanctions as follows:

Level	Trigger	Consequence
1	Twice late for form in one week	20-minute Break time detention on the following Monday or Tuesday with the form teacher. Form teacher contacts home via Synergy
2	Failure to attend break time detention	60-minute Pastoral detention on a Wednesday evening. Year Leader contacts home via Synergy
3	Late into school after register closes (9.00) with no contact from home	30-minute after school detention with Attendance Manager within 24 hours. Parents contacted via Synergy
4	Twice late into school after register closes	60-minute Pastoral detention on a Wednesday evening. Parents verbally contacted
5	Late 8 times in one half-term, before or after the register closes	Attendance Manager requests a meeting with parents in school

Similarly, lateness to lessons will incur sanctions at the discretion of the classroom teacher. The number of minutes late is recorded by the classroom teacher on the Synergy, and the data reviewed regularly by Subject Leaders, Year Leaders, our Attendance Team and the Senior Leadership Team who will identify patterns and trends – see *Use of Systems and Strategies* below - which may lead to parental/carers contact, as appropriate.

4.6 Use of Systems and Strategies

Fisher More uses Synergy for monitoring attendance and punctuality at both individual and whole school level. We will analyse data, patterns and trends to develop future action planning and target setting.

5 Term-time absences

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

It is very unlikely that requests for holidays or extended leave will be authorised but if parents want the school to consider such a request they must complete an application for holiday / extended leave form which is available on the school website at least one month before the relevant start date.

Family work patterns or the financial implications of going on holiday in term time would not meet the criteria of exceptional circumstances. Parents will then receive a response informing them of the school's decision. If parents/carers still take their son/daughter out of school, then the absence is deemed unauthorised and may incur a Penalty Notice (see above policy relating unauthorised absence). In cases where the school is not notified but holidays are taken in term time these will also be recorded as unauthorised and are also likely to incur a Penalty Notice

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- 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, Bargees (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

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

Level	Action	Staff
100%	Attendance group discussed on weekly basis in form time Termly certificates produced and handed out in assemblies. Synergy message sent to parents Annually rewards handed out and telephone conversation with parents	Form teacher Attendance Team Attendance Team/Year Leaders
95-98%	Monitored weekly Monitored half-termly. Messages sent to parents	Form teacher Year Leaders
92-95%	Monitored weekly Monitored half-termly. Telephone conversation with parents	Form teacher Year leaders
90-92%	Monitored weekly. Parental contact. Meetings requested in school. Intervention strategies applied, such as attendance panels, reward enticements	Attendance Team
Below 90% PA	Monitored daily once student becomes a PA Parental contact informing parent about becoming a PA Further Intervention strategies applied such as Attendance contracts, TAF meetings Collation of evidence of all interventions in preparation for a fixed penalty notice	Attendance Team
Below 85%	Home Visits Court Officer referral if no improvements or support from home	Year Leader/Attendance Manager Attendance Manager

5.3 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

A variety of rewards are given to pupils throughout the academic year to celebrate good attendance. A pupil's attendance also impacts on whether they are invited to attend the end of year rewards trip or the Year 11 Prom. Each term pupils with 100% attendance are allocated certificates and merits and will be invited to reward assemblies

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

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.

Our school collects and stores attendance data, and is used for internal purposes only. For example, to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as needing intervention and support

8. Monitoring arrangements

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

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and 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
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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