



Attendance Policy

St Dunstan's RC
Primary School

January 2024

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Mission statement

“We journey with Jesus beside us.”

And this means-

We have the encouragement and strength we need to achieve our goals and make good choices

We make everyone feel appreciated and treat each other with kindness and respect

We love God and others and know God’s love for us is everlasting

Our mission statement underpins everything we do in school and, in particular, the way that we behave towards each other throughout our school and the wider community.

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Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

St Dunstan's RC Primary School believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

St Dunstan's RC Primary School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will build strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school and identify the reasons for poor attendance

St Dunstan's RC Primary School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on admissions, safeguarding, anti-bullying, child protection, safeguarding and behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

This policy aims to:

- Promote good attendance
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Promote early identification to address patterns of absence
- Promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Legal Framework

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](#)

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

Legal proceedings are a statutory intervention used by the local authority against the parents of registered pupils who fail to attend regularly at school. Parents whose children are on a school register and fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child(ren), may be guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and the authority may take enforcement action through the courts to secure regular attendance.

Legal proceedings are not used as a punishment to parents for their pupil's absence from school; they are a supportive measure intended to make parents realise the importance of attendance and to avoid further absence from school.

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A prosecution can take place against any person who has parental responsibility for the child's education or who has care of the child. Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children are properly educated. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. If you allow your child to be absent from school without good reason, the school will not authorise the absence, you may be committing an offence, and you could be issued with a penalty notice or prosecuted.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

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The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present
- absent
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Safeguarding

Every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places a child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses: Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, FGM and CSE.

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

In order to allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least two other contact numbers in case of emergency.

It is also important for parents inform the school of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances.

Categorising Absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents must advise the school by telephone or email on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. Parents are asked to contact the school daily to inform of their child's absence.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

- Illness Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the head teacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc. This includes if a pupil is absent due to circumstances related to COVID-19.
- Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.
- Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances. Parents need to request this by writing to the headteacher.
- Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.
- Religious Observance St Dunstan's RC Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration by written request by the parent of authorised absence.
- Traveller Absence It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible (*see Appendix 2*)
- Late Arrival The school day starts at 8.50am pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late. The register will close at 9.15am, pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as an unauthorised late, (code U) this will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

Pupils arriving late must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment, evidence of appointments will be requested.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

- Unauthorised absence - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the head teacher.

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave being granted.

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school will request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrates' court.

Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

St Dunstan's RC Primary School will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governance

The Governing body 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

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

The Attendance officer

The attendance officer is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- 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/[role] (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Ms Dawn Prescott and can be contacted via 0161 681 5665 or via email at d.prescott@st-dunstans.manchester.sch.uk

Mental Health Lead

Mental Lead is responsible for:

- strategic oversight for setting a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing
- promoting the health and wellbeing of children and young people in school

Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the registers are completed accurately by marking a child as attending or absent.

School admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the attendance lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- 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 the school with at least 2 emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

Using Attendance Data

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether there are 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.

Analysing attendance

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

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

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 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
- Parents will be invited into an attendance meeting with the attendance lead to discuss support available, this may include but not limited to attendance contracts and Early Help Assessment.

Support Systems

School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties and trauma in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. It is expected that the child and their family work collaboratively with school to identify the anxiety-based school avoidance resources most appropriate for support and to accept the support that is offered or advised.

St Dunstan's RC Primary School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance for all pupils.

Strategies used will include:

- Escalation of attendance approach
- Parenting contracts
- Attendance reward charts
- Referrals to support agencies such as early help or MThrive Hubs
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Emotional-based School Avoidance support pathway
- Trauma-informed approaches
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Inclusion Strategy Toolkit
- Reintegration support packages

If a pupil has an Education, Health & Care plan, St Dunstan's RC Primary School will communicate with Manchester City Council EHCP Team at an early stage once they become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the child's needs.

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, St Dunstan's RC Primary School may consider the use of legal sanctions.

Legal Interventions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. St Dunstan's RC Primary School will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of up to three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts or Penalty Notices

Parenting Contracts (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the headteacher.

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £160 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Attendance lead.

Appendix 1 – Attendance Distributed Leadership Model

The following is an example of a school's 'escalation of attendance Intervention' based on agreed percentages and sessions missed. This can be adapted to include key strategies deployed by the school to support raising attendance and reducing overall persistent absence. This is not a definitive list but provides examples of 'escalation' linked to each attendance band.

The interventions can be adapted/modified to reflect bespoke intervention for targeted groups or vulnerable cohorts.

Please note a finalised version should be shared with parent/carers and pupils in a format which is accessible to all stakeholders to show the escalation of intervention. Roles and responsibilities can be added to support a distributed leadership model for attendance.

GREEN

Pupils with attendance between 100% to 97%

- Parents will receive a letter home congratulating them on their child's good/excellent attendance.
- Pupils will be rewarded within the school's award systems in recognition of good/excellent attendance.
- Pupils with this level of termly and annual attendance will receive a certificate of achievement and their names will be displayed on the school attendance notice board.
- A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school self-evaluation and impact of interventions.

AMBER - Red

Pupils with attendance between 96% and below

- **Attendance Officer** will speak to the parent and a letter will be sent advising of concern and outlining the parents' responsibilities
- Confirm with the parent the reason for absence and offer any support that may be required.
- Set an individual attendance target for the parent to support improving their child's attendance
- Agree a review date

Where improvement has not occurred following this intervention, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- All parties confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve.
- Does the family need support through an Early Help Assessment?
- Is a referral needed or additional mentoring to support pupil?

Appendix 2: Traveller Family Absence

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1996, section 444(6), states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in the year preceding the absence. This applies only when the family proves it is engaged in a trade or business that requires it to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

St Dunstan's RC Primary School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at xxx will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

St Dunstan's RC Primary School can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and inform school regarding proposed return dates.

St Dunstan's RC Primary School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

The child is on roll and attending another visited school

Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.