

St Margaret Clitherow Attendance Policy September 2026

Approval Information		
Reviewed by:	Headteacher Mrs A Mulholland	
Approved by:		Full LGB
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Document History	
V1.0	Original
V1.1	Edited to clarify that persistent absence is less than 90% attendance. Requested by governors at approval.

1. Our Commitment to Attendance

At St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School, we believe that every child has the right to attend school regularly and receive a high-quality education.

Our school motto is:

“We act with love, build our faith and grow as people.”

Regular attendance is fundamental to this. Attending school every day enables children to make the most of their education, develop positive relationships, build confidence and independence, and achieve their full potential.

We recognise that attendance difficulties can have a range of causes. Our approach is therefore based on high expectations, early identification, supportive intervention and partnership with families.

We will always seek to understand and address the barriers preventing a child from attending before considering formal or legal intervention, except where immediate action is necessary.

The Department for Education's statutory guidance, Working together to improve school attendance, places a clear emphasis on schools and families working together to improve attendance and using legal intervention only where appropriate.

2. Statutory Framework

This policy is written with regard to the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended
- Working together to improve school attendance – Department for Education statutory guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Relevant Bracknell Forest Council attendance procedures and Code of Conduct
- Any subsequent Department for Education statutory guidance or regulations relating to school attendance.

The school will review this policy when statutory guidance or legislation changes.

3. Aims of this Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- promote excellent attendance and punctuality;
- ensure that all pupils attend school regularly;
- establish clear expectations for pupils, parents, staff and governors;
- identify attendance concerns at an early stage;
- work positively and supportively with families to remove barriers to attendance;
- provide appropriate support for pupils with SEND, medical needs, mental health difficulties and other barriers to attendance;
- identify patterns of absence and lateness;
- ensure that attendance is monitored accurately and consistently;
- fulfil the school's safeguarding responsibilities;

- work effectively with the Local Authority and other agencies;
- use formal and legal interventions where appropriate and necessary.

At St Margaret Clitherow, attendance below 95% is a concern and will be actively monitored and followed up.

4. Attendance Expectations

There are 190 school days in a typical academic year. This means that there are approximately 175 days when children are not required to attend school.

Parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually.

The school expects pupils to:

- attend school every day unless they are genuinely unable to do so;
- arrive on time;
- attend for the full school day;
- return to school promptly following an agreed absence;
- attend medical appointments outside school hours wherever reasonably possible.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- ensure their child attends school every day;
 - ensure their child arrives on time;
 - notify the school promptly when their child is unable to attend;
 - provide accurate reasons for absence;
 - work with the school when attendance becomes a concern;
 - avoid booking holidays during term time;
 - arrange routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible.
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5. School Times and Registration

The school day begins at 8.45am.

Registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

The morning register closes at 9.00am.

A pupil arriving:

- after 8.45am but before 9.00am will be recorded as L – late before the register closes;
- after 9.00am will normally be recorded as U – arrived after the register closed, which counts as an unauthorised absence for that session unless another attendance code is appropriate.

The DfE attendance coding guidance confirms the distinction between L and U and requires schools to use the national attendance codes.

Parents should not take children directly to classrooms. Children arriving late must report to the school office.

The number and pattern of late arrivals will be monitored. Persistent lateness can have a significant impact on learning and may lead to further intervention.

6. Reporting an Absence

Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of absence, preferably before 9.00am.

Parents should telephone the school office on:

01344 424030 or email the school office secretary@smc-bracknell.com

If no explanation has been received, the school will make contact with the parent/carers.

Where appropriate, unexplained absence will be followed up immediately because unexplained absence can be a safeguarding concern.

For pupils who have an allocated social worker, unexplained absence will be followed up on Day 1 and the social worker will be informed where appropriate.

7. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

The school is responsible for deciding whether an absence is authorised.

A parent's explanation for absence does not automatically mean that the absence will be authorised.

Authorised absence

An absence may be authorised where the school is satisfied that the circumstances meet the relevant statutory requirements.

Examples may include:

- genuine illness;
- medical or dental appointments which cannot reasonably be arranged outside school hours;
- religious observance where the legal requirements are met;
- exceptional circumstances agreed by the Headteacher;
- other circumstances specifically permitted under the attendance regulations.

Unauthorised absence

An absence may be unauthorised where:

- no satisfactory explanation has been provided;
- the reason provided does not meet the criteria for authorised absence;
- leave has not been agreed by the school;
- a child is absent because of a family holiday during term time;
- a child is absent because of a parent's work or convenience;
- a child is absent for a birthday or similar event without exceptional circumstances;
- a child does not return from agreed leave without a satisfactory explanation.

The school may request appropriate evidence where there are concerns about the frequency or circumstances of absence. This will be proportionate and will not require parents to incur unnecessary costs.

8. Illness and Medical Needs

The school recognises that children will occasionally be unable to attend because of illness.

However, parents should not routinely keep children at home for minor ailments where they are well enough to attend.

Where a child has a long-term medical condition, recurring illness or treatment which affects attendance, the school will work with the family and relevant professionals to understand the impact on attendance and identify appropriate support.

The school will not adopt a blanket requirement for medical evidence in all cases.

Where there are repeated or concerning absences, the school may request appropriate evidence where this is necessary to establish the reason for absence.

9. Pupils with SEND, Medical Conditions or Mental Health Difficulties

The school recognises that some pupils face additional barriers to attendance, including:

- special educational needs and disabilities;
- neurodivergence;
- anxiety;
- mental health difficulties;
- sensory needs;
- communication difficulties;
- physical or mental health conditions;
- family circumstances;
- difficulties associated with transition;
- previous negative experiences of education.

Where attendance difficulties may be connected to SEND, anxiety, mental health or unmet need, the school will seek to understand the underlying barrier rather than treating the absence simply as a compliance issue.

Where appropriate, the school will:

- involve the SENCO at an early stage;
- review the pupil's individual needs;
- consider reasonable adjustments;
- work with parents/carers and the pupil;
- consider support through the pupil's existing provision;
- involve external professionals where appropriate;
- develop an Attendance Support Plan;
- review progress regularly.

The school will consider its duties under the Equality Act 2010 when making decisions about attendance support and legal intervention.

Where attendance difficulties are linked to anxiety or school avoidance, the school will consider a graduated and supportive approach to reintegration rather than automatically moving directly to enforcement.

10. Early Intervention and Attendance Support

The school believes that early intervention is more effective than waiting for attendance to deteriorate significantly.

Attendance will therefore be monitored regularly.

Where attendance begins to fall below expected levels, the school may:

- contact parents;
- provide an attendance update;
- discuss concerns with the family;
- meet with parents/carers;
- speak with the pupil;
- identify barriers to attendance;
- agree practical strategies;
- provide pastoral support;
- involve the SENCO or other school staff;
- work with external agencies;
- develop an Attendance Support Plan;

- monitor attendance over an agreed period.

The school will work with families rather than doing things to families wherever possible.

Support will be proportionate to the circumstances of the child and family.

11. Attendance Support Plans

Where attendance is causing concern, the school may develop an Attendance Support Plan with the family.

This may include:

- the attendance concern;
- the barriers identified;
- actions to be taken by the school;
- actions to be taken by parents/carers;
- actions for the pupil;
- support from other agencies;
- an agreed review date;
- attendance expectations.

Attendance Support Plans will be reviewed and amended where necessary.

Where support is appropriate, the school will normally seek to establish whether support is working before progressing to formal legal intervention.

12. Attendance and Safeguarding

Attendance is an important safeguarding indicator.

The school will consider whether patterns of absence or lateness may indicate:

- safeguarding concerns;
- neglect;
- family difficulties;
- domestic abuse;
- exploitation;
- mental health difficulties;
- bullying;
- unmet SEND;
- difficulties at home or school;
- risk of a child becoming missing from education.

Unexplained or concerning absence will be followed up promptly.

Where safeguarding concerns are identified, the school's safeguarding procedures will be followed and information will be shared with relevant agencies where appropriate.

13. Children with a Social Worker

Children who have an allocated social worker may be particularly vulnerable.

The school will:

- follow up unexplained absence promptly;
- monitor attendance closely;
- share relevant attendance information with the allocated social worker;
- contribute to multi-agency meetings where appropriate;
- ensure attendance is considered as part of the child's wider safeguarding and welfare plan.

14. Attendance Monitoring

Attendance is monitored:

- daily;
- weekly;
- half-termly;
- termly;
- annually.

The school will analyse attendance by:

- individual pupil;
- year group;
- class;
- SEND status;
- vulnerable groups;
- persistent absence (Attendance below 90%);
- patterns of absence;
- lateness;
- authorised and unauthorised absence.

Particular attention will be paid to pupils whose attendance is:

- below 95%;
- approaching persistent absence;
- persistently absent (Attendance below 90%);
- severely absent;
- showing a concerning pattern;
- deteriorating rapidly.

Parents may receive attendance letters when attendance falls below the school's expected level.

15. Persistent Absence (Attendance below 90%)

Persistent absence is a significant concern because missed education accumulates quickly. Attendance at 90% equates to a child being absent for half a day every week or a full day every two weeks. This in total equals 19 days of missed education in an academic year.

The school will identify pupils at risk of persistent absence at an early stage and will work with families to improve attendance.

Persistent absence will not be viewed simply as a percentage. The school will consider:

- the number of sessions missed;
 - the reasons for absence;
 - patterns of absence;
 - barriers to attendance;
 - SEND or medical needs;
 - safeguarding concerns;
 - family circumstances;
 - the effectiveness of previous support.
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16. Lateness

Punctuality is an important part of school attendance.

School starts at 8.45am and pupils are expected to be in school and ready to learn.

Late arrival:

- disrupts the pupil's learning;
- can disrupt other pupils;
- may cause children to miss important information and learning;
- can contribute significantly to lost education over time.

All late arrivals will be recorded.

Persistent late arrival will be discussed with parents and may result in an Attendance Support Plan or further intervention.

Where a pupil arrives after the register has closed, the attendance register will normally record a U code.

17. Term-Time Leave and Holidays

Parents do not have an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.

At St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School, term-time holidays are strongly discouraged.

Leave of absence during term time will only be granted where the school considers that the circumstances are exceptional.

Each request will be considered individually, taking account of the specific circumstances and any relevant background information.

The school will not authorise term-time leave simply because:

- it is cheaper;
- parents' work commitments make holidays difficult;
- the holiday has already been booked;
- the holiday was booked in error;
- family members are visiting;
- the child has already had good attendance;
- the holiday is at the beginning or end of term.

The school may refuse leave where there are insufficient exceptional circumstances.

Where a term-time holiday is taken without authorisation, the absence will be recorded using Code G – absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday.

Parents should request leave as far in advance as possible using the school's Request for Exceptional Absence Form.

18. Attendance Codes

The school uses the statutory attendance and absence codes prescribed by the Department for Education.

Important codes include:

Code	Meaning
/	Present at morning registration
\	Present at afternoon registration
B	Attending approved educational activity
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances
C1	Regulated performance
C2	Temporary reduced timetable
E	Excluded
G	Absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday
I	Unable to attend because of sickness

Code	Meaning
J1	Interview
K	Educational provision arranged by the Local Authority
L	Arrived after register opened but before it closed
M	Medical or dental appointment
N	Circumstances not yet established
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity
Q	Unable to attend because of lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance
U	Arrived after the register closed
Y codes	Unable to attend because of specified exceptional circumstances

19. National Framework for Penalty Notices

The school will follow the National Framework for Penalty Notices and the relevant Bracknell Forest procedures.

A national threshold applies when a pupil has:

10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

Ten sessions is normally equivalent to five school days.

The sessions do not need to be consecutive.

The threshold can be reached through a combination of relevant unauthorised absence codes, including:

- G – unauthorised holiday;
- N – circumstances not yet established;
- O – unauthorised absence;
- U – arrival after the register has closed.

For example, a pupil could reach the threshold through a combination of term-time holiday and unauthorised absence or lateness after the register closes.

A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session.

The 10-school-week period can cross different terms and academic years.

20. Support Before Enforcement

Meeting the national threshold does not automatically mean that a penalty notice will be issued.

The school and Local Authority will consider the individual circumstances.

Where support is appropriate, the school will normally consider:

- whether support has already been offered;
- whether the family has engaged with support;
- whether further support is appropriate;
- whether the support is working;
- whether another legal or non-legal intervention would be more appropriate;
- the pupil's individual circumstances;
- SEND and disability considerations;

- medical and mental health needs;
- safeguarding considerations.

The DfE's statutory guidance makes clear that penalty notices should be used where they are appropriate and that support should be prioritised where appropriate.

A Notice to Improve may be used where appropriate as a final opportunity for parents to engage with support before a penalty notice is issued.

However, support will not necessarily be appropriate in every circumstance. For example, an unauthorised term-time holiday may be considered for a penalty notice where the relevant criteria are met.

21. Penalty Notice Amounts

Under the National Framework:

First penalty notice

£160 per parent, per child, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

If not paid by day 21, the amount rises to £160 and must be paid within 28 days.

Second penalty notice

Where a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period:

£160 per parent, per child.

There is no reduced £80 rate for a second penalty notice.

Third offence within three years

A third penalty notice cannot normally be issued to the same parent for the same child within the three-year period.

Alternative legal action may instead be considered, including prosecution.

The national framework limits penalty notices to two per parent, per child within a three-year period.

22. Prosecution

Where attendance does not improve despite appropriate support and intervention, or where circumstances warrant immediate legal intervention, the Local Authority may consider prosecution.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents may be prosecuted where their child fails to attend school regularly.

A court may impose a fine of up to £2,500 per parent, per child for the relevant offence.

The school will work with Bracknell Forest Council and provide appropriate evidence where legal intervention is being considered.

23. The Role of the Senior Attendance Champion

The school has a named Senior Attendance Champion.

Senior Attendance Champion: Headteacher – Mrs Anne Mulholland

The Senior Attendance Champion will:

- provide strategic leadership for attendance;
- establish and maintain a strong attendance culture;
- ensure that attendance is a whole-school priority;
- monitor attendance data regularly;
- analyse trends and patterns;
- identify pupils and groups requiring additional support;
- ensure that appropriate support is provided;

- monitor the effectiveness of attendance interventions;
- work with the SENCO and safeguarding team where appropriate;
- liaise with the Local Authority;
- ensure that legal intervention is used appropriately;
- report attendance information to governors;
- ensure staff understand their responsibilities for attendance.

The DfE guidance specifically identifies the importance of a named senior attendance champion with strategic responsibility for attendance.

24. The Role of the Attendance Team

The school office and attendance staff will:

- maintain accurate attendance records;
- follow up unexplained absence;
- record reasons for absence;
- contact parents where appropriate;
- monitor lateness;
- produce attendance information;
- alert school leaders to concerns;
- support attendance interventions;
- maintain appropriate attendance records and evidence.

25. The Role of the SENCO

The SENCO will be involved where attendance difficulties may be related to:

- SEND;
- neurodivergence;
- anxiety;
- sensory needs;
- communication needs;
- unmet educational needs;
- difficulties accessing the curriculum or school environment.

The SENCO will work with the Senior Attendance Champion, class teacher, pupil, parents and external agencies as appropriate.

26. The Role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body has strategic responsibility for ensuring that attendance is prioritised.

The Governing Body will:

- set high expectations for attendance;
- monitor attendance data;
- challenge school leaders where appropriate;
- review attendance trends;
- ensure appropriate support is available;
- ensure statutory responsibilities are met;
- monitor the effectiveness of the attendance policy;
- ensure that vulnerable pupils receive appropriate support.

A Designated Link Attendance Governor will be appointed to provide specific oversight of attendance and to hold the Senior Attendance Champion to account.

Designated Link Attendance Governor is: Diana Mermezan

The Link Governor will meet with the Senior Attendance Champion regularly and report to the Governing Body as appropriate.

27. The Role of Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- ensure their child attends school regularly;
- ensure punctual arrival;
- notify school of absence on the first day;
- provide truthful and accurate information;
- avoid unnecessary appointments during school time;
- arrange holidays during school holidays;
- engage positively with attendance support;
- attend meetings where requested;
- support agreed attendance strategies;
- communicate with school if they are experiencing difficulties that may affect attendance.

Parents should contact the school at the earliest opportunity if they are worried about their child's attendance.

28. Working with Families

We recognise that parents may sometimes experience genuine difficulties in getting their child into school.

Families are encouraged to speak to the school early.

The school may work with:

- parents/carers;
- pupils;
- class teachers;
- SENCO;
- DSL/pastoral staff;
- school nurse;
- GP or other health professionals;
- Local Authority Attendance Team;
- Early Help;
- Children's Social Care;
- other appropriate agencies.

Our aim is always to understand the problem and identify a sustainable solution.

29. Attendance Data and Information Sharing

The school collects attendance information daily and uses attendance data to monitor individual pupils, groups and whole-school trends.

Attendance information is shared with the Department for Education and Local Authority through the required statutory systems and in accordance with current data-sharing requirements.

The school will provide attendance information to relevant agencies where there is a statutory or safeguarding reason to do so.

The school will ensure that attendance information is accurate, timely and appropriately recorded.

The DfE's current attendance framework provides for more timely access to pupil-level attendance information across schools, trusts, Local Authorities and the Department.

30. Attendance and the Local Authority

The school works closely with Bracknell Forest Council's attendance and Education Welfare services.

Where attendance does not improve despite appropriate school-based support, or where circumstances warrant formal intervention, the school may refer the matter to the Local Authority.

The Local Authority may:

- provide advice and support;
- become involved in attendance meetings;
- issue a Notice to Improve;
- issue a Penalty Notice where the relevant criteria are met;
- consider prosecution;
- use other legal interventions where appropriate.

31. Monitoring and Review of this Policy

The Senior Attendance Champion will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.

Attendance data will be reviewed regularly by school leaders and reported to governors.

The policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where there are changes to:

- legislation;
- DfE statutory guidance;
- Local Authority procedures;
- attendance codes;
- penalty notice arrangements.

32. Our Attendance Culture

At St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School, we believe that attendance is not simply about numbers.

Every school day provides an opportunity for a child to:

learn, belong, build friendships, grow in confidence and flourish.

We will maintain high expectations for attendance while recognising that every child and family is different.

Our approach will therefore be:

High expectations + early identification + support + partnership + appropriate challenge.

Where support works, we celebrate improved attendance.

Where barriers remain, we work harder to understand them.

Where parents do not engage with appropriate support, or where legal intervention is appropriate, we will take the necessary action to ensure that children receive the education to which they are entitled.

Appendix 1 – Attendance at a Glance

Attendance below 95%

Attendance is monitored and acted upon.

Unexplained absence

Followed up promptly, with safeguarding considerations.

Persistent absence (Attendance below 90%)

Individual support and intervention put in place.

SEND/mental health-related absence

SENCO involvement and appropriate reasonable adjustments/support considered.

10 unauthorised sessions in 10 school weeks

National penalty notice threshold is reached and the case will be considered individually.

Penalty Notice

First notice: £80 if paid within 21 days / £160 within 28 days.

Second notice within three years: £160.

Third notice within three years: alternative legal action considered.

Term-time holiday

Normally unauthorised unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Late before 9.00am

L code

Arriving after 9.00am

Normally U code.

Previous H code

No longer used. Term-time holidays are recorded using G where the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday.

Appendix 2 – Key Attendance Messages for Parents

Every day matters.

A child with 90% attendance misses approximately one day every two weeks.

Over a full school year, 90% attendance means around 19 days of education missed.

At St Margaret Clitherow, we therefore monitor attendance carefully and will contact families where attendance falls below 95%.

We will always seek to work with families to understand and overcome barriers to attendance.
