

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Academy Committee Members and Staff of St Thomas More recognise the importance of good attendance and punctuality and the links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. The whole school community has a responsibility for promoting excellent attendance: Academy Committee Members, parents, pupils and all school staff.

The aim of PUPIL BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our Mission:

Inspired by the life and message of Jesus, and believing that every child is made in the image of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit PUPIL BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our Mission:

Inspired by the life and message of Jesus, and believing that every child is made in the image of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit {enter academy name} is just like a family, where everyone is welcomed; where everyone is loved, respected and cared for; where everyone is helped to achieve their very best, and where God is at the heart of everything we do.

Academy Mission Statement

The family of St Thomas More School shares together a commitment to our School Mission –

*“To promote the formation of the complete person based on the example and inspiration of Jesus Christ and to help the pupils develop a personal relationship with God in their journey through life. To ensure every child shares in an educational environment filled with love and concern – a community joining together to help create a better world. “*

Aims and Expectations

As a Catholic academy we regard every individual as unique and special in God’s family. It is a primary aim of our academy that every member of the academy community feels valued and respected, and that each person is treated fairly and well. We are a caring community, whose values are built on mutual trust and respect for all. The academy behaviour policy is therefore designed to support the way in which all members of the academy can live and work together in a supportive way. It aims to promote an environment where everyone feels happy, safe and secure.

The academy has a number of academy rules, but the primary aim of the behaviour policy is not a system to enforce rules. It is a means of promoting good relationships, so that people can work together with the common purpose of helping everyone to learn and grow. This policy supports the academy community in aiming to allow everyone to work together in an effective and considerate way following Gospel values.

The academy expects every member of the academy community to behave in a considerate way towards others.

We treat all children fairly and apply this behaviour policy in a consistent way.

This policy aims to help children to grow in a safe and secure environment, and to become positive, responsible and increasingly independent members of the academy community.

The academy rewards good behaviour, as it believes that this will develop an ethos of kindness and co-operation. This policy is designed to promote good behaviour, rather than merely deter anti-social behaviour.

#### Rewards and Sanctions

We praise and reward children for good behaviour in a variety of ways:

- teachers congratulate children
- teachers give children achievement points
- we distribute merits to children either for consistent good work or behaviour, or to acknowledge outstanding effort or acts of kindness in academy
- all classes have an opportunity to lead an achievement assembly where they are able to show examples of their best work.

The academy acknowledges all the efforts and achievements of children, both in and out of academy and celebrates these in class and assemblies.

#### 2

The academy employs a number of sanctions to enforce the academy rules, and to ensure a safe and positive learning environment. Our “least to most intrusive” approach is included in Appendix A. We employ each sanction appropriately to each individual situation.

- We expect children to listen carefully to instructions in lessons. If they do not do so, we ask them either to move to a place nearer the teacher, or to sit on their own. ☒ We expect children to try their best in all activities. If they do not do so, we may ask them to redo a task
- If a child is disruptive in class, the teacher reprimands him or her. If a child misbehaves repeatedly, we isolate the child from the rest of the class until s/he calms down, and is in a position to work sensibly again with others

- The safety of the children is paramount in all situations. If a child's behaviour endangers the safety of others, the class teacher stops the activity and prevents the child from taking part for the rest of that session
- If a child threatens, hurts or upsets another pupil, the class teacher records the incident and the child is punished. If a child repeatedly acts in a way that disrupts or upsets others, the academy contacts the child's parents and seeks an appointment in order to discuss the situation, with a view to improving the behaviour of the child. Any incidents of bullying are regarded as unacceptable and are dealt with according to the academy's Anti-Bullying policy.

The class teacher discusses the academy rules with each class. In addition to the academy rules, each class also has its own classroom code, which is agreed by the children and displayed on the wall of the classroom. In this way, every child in the academy knows the standard of behaviour that we expect in our academy. If there are incidents of anti-social behaviour, the class teacher discusses these with the whole class during 'circle time'.

The academy does not tolerate bullying of any kind. If we discover that an act of bullying or intimidation has taken place, we act immediately to stop any further occurrences of such behaviour. While it is very difficult to eradicate bullying, we do everything in our power to ensure that all children attend academy free from fear.

All members of staff are aware of current guidelines. Staff only intervene physically to restrain children or to prevent injury to a child, or if a child is in danger of hurting him/herself. The actions that we take are in line with government guidelines on the restraint of children.

#### The Role of the Class Teacher

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to ensure that the academy rules are enforced in their class, and that their class behaves in a responsible manner during lesson time.

The class teachers in our academy have high expectations of the children in terms of behaviour, and they strive to ensure that all children work to the best of their ability.

The class teacher treats each child fairly and enforces the classroom code consistently. The teacher treats all children in their class with respect and understanding.

If a child misbehaves repeatedly in class, the class teacher keeps a record of all such incidents. In the first instance, the class teacher deals with incidents him/herself in the normal manner. However, if misbehaviour continues, the class teacher seeks help and advice from the Key Stage manager and /or.

The class teacher liaises with the SENCO and external agencies, as necessary, to support and guide the progress of each child. The class teacher may, for example, discuss the needs of a child with the education social worker or LA behaviour support service.

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The class teacher reports to parents about the progress of each child in their class, in line with the whole–academy policy. The class teacher may also contact a parent if there are concerns about the behaviour or welfare of a child.

#### The Role of the Principal

It is the responsibility of the Principal to implement the academy behaviour policy consistently throughout the academy, and to report to Committee Representatives, when requested, on the effectiveness of the policy. It is also the responsibility of the Principal to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all children in the academy.

The Principal supports the staff by implementing the policy, by setting the standards of behaviour, and by supporting staff in the implementation of the policy. The Principal keeps records of all reported serious incidents of misbehaviour. The Principal has the responsibility for giving fixed-term suspensions to individual children for serious acts of misbehaviour. For repeated or very serious acts of anti-social behaviour, the Principal may permanently exclude a child. Both these actions are only taken after the academy Committee Representatives have been notified.

#### The Role of Parents

The academy works collaboratively with parents, so children receive consistent messages about how to behave at home and at academy.

We explain the academy rules in the academy prospectus, and we expect parents to read these and support them.

We expect parents to support their child’s learning, and to co-operate with the academy, as set out in the home–academy agreement. We try to build a supportive dialogue between the home and the academy, and we inform parents immediately if we have concerns about their child’s welfare or behaviour.

If the academy has to use reasonable sanctions to punish a child, parents should support the actions of the academy. If parents have any concern about the way that their child has been treated, they should initially contact the class teacher. If the concern remains, they should contact the Principal or academy Committee Representatives. If these discussions cannot resolve the problem, a formal grievance or appeal process can be implemented.

#### The Role of Committee Representatives

The Academy Committee has the responsibility of setting down these general guidelines on standards of discipline and behaviour, and of reviewing their effectiveness. The Committee Representatives support the Principal in carrying out these guidelines.

The Principal has the day-to-day authority to implement the academy behaviour and discipline policy, but Committee Representatives may give advice to the Principal about particular disciplinary issues. The Principal must take this into account when making decisions about matters of behaviour.

#### Fixed-term and permanent exclusions

Only the Principal (or the acting Principal) has the power to exclude a pupil from academy. The Principal may exclude a pupil for one or more fixed periods, for up to 45 days in any one academy year. The Principal may also exclude a pupil permanently. It is also possible for the Principal to convert a fixed-term exclusion into a permanent exclusion, if the circumstances warrant this.

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If the Principal excludes a pupil, s/he informs the parents immediately, giving reasons for the exclusion. At the same time, the Principal makes it clear to the parents that they can, if they wish, appeal against the decision to the Academy Committee. The academy informs the parents how to make any such appeal.

The Principal informs the LA and the Academy Committee about any permanent exclusion, and about any fixed-term exclusions beyond five days in any one term.

The Academy Committee itself cannot either exclude a pupil or extend the exclusion period made by the Principal.

The Academy Committee has a discipline committee which is made up of between three and five members. This committee considers any exclusion appeals on behalf of the Committee Representatives.

When an appeals panel meets to consider an exclusion, they consider the circumstances in which the pupil was excluded, consider any representation by parents and the LA, and consider whether the pupil should be reinstated.

If the Committee Representatives' appeals panel decides that a pupil should be reinstated, the Principal must comply with this ruling.

#### Monitoring

The Principal monitors the effectiveness of this policy on a regular basis. S/he also reports to the Academy Committee on the effectiveness of the policy and, if necessary, makes recommendations for further improvements.

The academy keeps a variety of records of incidents of misbehaviour. The class teacher records minor classroom incidents. The Principal records those incidents where a child is sent to him/her on account of bad behaviour. We also keep a record of any incidents that

occur at break or lunchtimes: lunchtime supervisors give written details of any incident to teaching staff and the Principal.

The Principal keeps a record of any pupil who is suspended for a fixed-term, or who is permanently excluded.

It is the responsibility of the Academy Committee to monitor the rate of suspensions and exclusions, and to ensure that the academy policy is administered fairly and consistently.

#### Review

The Academy Committee reviews this policy every two years. The Committee Representatives may, however, review the policy earlier than this, if the government introduces new regulations, or if the Academy Committee receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved.

#### Designated Teacher

Date      Date agreed by staff

Date agreed by Academy Committee

Signed on behalf of the Academy Committee

#### Date for Review

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The Principal keeps a record of any pupil who is suspended for a fixed-term, or who is permanently excluded.

It is the responsibility of the Academy Committee to monitor the rate of suspensions and exclusions, and to ensure that the academy policy is administered fairly and consistently.

## Review

The Academy Committee reviews this policy every two years. The Committee Representatives may, however, review the policy earlier than this, if the government introduces new regulations, or if the Academy Committee receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved.

Designated Teacher    Breda Bowles

Date agreed by Academy Committee

Signed on behalf of the Academy Committee

The Attendance Policy is to provide an environment which encourages all our pupils to attend school regularly and punctually, and is framed within the Gospel values.

### **Wisdom**

We will promote good punctuality and attendance as essential – not just to acquire knowledge, but to develop an understanding of how to use it wisely.

### **Integrity**

We will act fairly and consistently in dealing with attendance matters. We will teach children to value good attendance and punctuality as aspects of personal responsibility.

### **Justice**

We will work with others to defend the right of children to an education, in accordance with the law.

### **Compassion**

We will respond sensitively to the needs of families, recognising that there are times when it is appropriate for children to be absent from school.

### **Why Attendance is Important**

Any absence (or lateness) affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

Any pupil's absence (or lateness) disrupts teaching routines, and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Significant absence and lateness can have a massive impact on a child's self-esteem; walking into a class that is already underway can be distressing for any young child.

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. Promoting welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the curriculum and anti-bullying

Failing to attend this school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

If a pupil is prevented from attending school because of sickness or other unavoidable cause, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school of the pupil's absence by telephone on the first day of absence (and later confirmed in writing).

Wherever possible, parents should avoid making medical/dental appointments for their children during school hours.

### **Understanding Absence**

Every session's (ie morning or afternoon) absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. It is the school, and not parent/carers that decides whether or not to authorise an absence.

**Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and necessary. This type of absence may lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed (see "Leave of Absence" below)

Whilst a child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend school it is better that parents speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% (Government figure) or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level can do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we will seek parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We will monitor all absence thoroughly. Any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be given priority consideration. Parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with relevant mentoring where absence affects attainment.

When necessary we will hold a panel meeting, which may include representation from the Oxfordshire Attendance and Engagement team, to which the parents/carers of any child who is a persistent absentee is invited to attend. A complete review of each case will be carried out irrespective of whether the child is represented or not.

All PA (identified by the Government figure) pupils and their parents will be subject to an Action Plan, which may include:

- allocating additional support through a mentor,
- individual incentive programmes,
- parenting contracts
- participation in group activities around raising attendance.

PA cases are also made known to the Local Authority School Attendance and Engagement Team where necessary.

## **Roles and Responsibilities for Attendance**

### **Parents should:**

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
- Contact school on first day of absence and keep school informed of absence lasting for longer periods
- Avoid time off in term time wherever possible and apply in advance *using the "Request for Leave of Absence" form/ in writing*
- Participate in Attendance Meetings in school
- Participate in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by the school or other agencies

### **Pupils should:**

- Attend school and register punctually each day
- Speak to their parents or teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
- Co-operate and participate in interventions and support offered by the school or by other agencies

**The Principal will:**

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
- Ensure that parents are clearly informed about expectations around attendance, including by placing this Attendance policy on the school website and by drawing parents' attention to it at appropriate intervals
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters Ensure adequate, time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring that the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
- Meet with parents where attendance or punctuality is a continuing concern

**Designated Staff (School Administration Team and Principal) will:**

- Contact parents on the first day of absence if a reason for absence has not been provided
- Follow up with phone calls to emergency contacts and letters where necessary
- Input and update the attendance registers regularly
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance and using Parenting Contracts where appropriate
- Ensure interventions are escalated in a timely fashion where individual attendance is not improving
- Refer to Oxfordshire Attendance and Engagement any pupils whose whereabouts is unknown

**School Staff will:**

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
- Be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- Differentiate appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence
- Be aware of regular patterns of absence and refer to office for investigation
- See pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all school staff
- Ensure children absent for any periods are re-integrated and supported
- Keep accurate attendance registers

**The Academy Committee will:**

- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
- Regularly review the policy and refer any comments to the Board of Directors

**The Board of Directors will:**



**INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL**  
**GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

*To be read in conjunction with the school's Attendance Policy*

**ATTENDANCE - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

***When does my child need to be in school?***

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at xxx am and the afternoon register at xxxx pm

***What happens if my child is late?***

Registration finishes at xxx am in the morning and xxx pm in the afternoon.

If your child arrives between xxx am and xxx he/she will be marked late.

If your child arrives after xxx he/she will be marked as absent

Pupils who arrive after registration should be brought to the School Office by a responsible adult. If a pupil is late on several occasions, parents will be contacted to discuss reasons/difficulties for lateness.

***Does the school need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?***

Parents should telephone the school on the first and each subsequent day of absence (*and we require a written explanation on your child's return to school*). If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence.

***If I telephone (and send a letter) will this mean absence is authorised?***

For absent pupils of compulsory school age, the register must record whether or not their absences are authorised. If no acceptable reason for the absence has been received at the time of registration, the absence is unauthorised unless or until a satisfactory reason is given. An explanation (or note) from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence rests with the school.

***Will the school contact me if my child is absent?***

The school will phone you if we have not heard from you by xxx am on the first day of absence. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance. In order to do this, we must have up to date contact phone numbers, and it is your responsibility to ensure the school has the correct contact details.

***Can we take family holidays during term time?***

Holidays during term time will not be authorised. You must write a letter to the Principal/ fill in a Request for Leave form if you wish to take your child out of school during term time.

***What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?***

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning and eats

a healthy breakfast. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education

***My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?***

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

**GUIDANCE ON REQUESTING AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

The procedure for requesting any authorised absence during term time is as follows.

*A "Request for Leave of Absence" form must be completed/letter written in advance, and given into the school office with reasons given for the absence.*

The 2013 amendment to the 2006 Regulations states: *"Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances"* (see xx below). The Principal and Academy Committee Members will use their discretion and consider each request individually on its own merits.

Following receipt of the request, the parent/carer will be sent a response indicating whether the school is able to authorise the request.

If parent/carers still decide to take their child out of school for any reason and permission has not been granted, the absence will be deemed unauthorised.

In the first instance, parents will receive a warning letter, but further unauthorised absences will have to be notified to the local authority requesting a "Fixed Penalty Notice" be issued.

If a child lives with a family friend or relative for a period of time who has day to day care of the child, each responsible adult is considered as "Parent" under the Education Act and can equally be charged with the same offence and prosecuted.

The fixed penalty notice amounts to:

£60 per child per parent/carer payable within 21 days, or  
£120 per child per parent/carer if paid within 28 days.

Failure to pay a Fixed Term Penalty Notice may result in a criminal conviction and a fine in the Magistrates Court of up to £2500 per parent per child.

In exceptional circumstances, magistrates can impose a Parenting Order requiring attendance at a parenting class or even a custodial sentence of up to three months. An appearance at a magistrates' court could result in a criminal record for the parent/carer.

Fixed Penalty Notices have been introduced as part of the Government's drive to improve attendance, and are not the responsibility of the school.

### **Criteria for Exceptional Circumstances**

It is not possible to define exceptional circumstances, but examples of what might be considered as such are:

- Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays. This must be supported by documentary evidence from the organisation
- Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad
- To attend religious festivals or services such as the wedding or funeral of an immediate family member
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Evidence must be provided, from qualified professionals, such as a doctor
- Where there are other factors which the Principal may consider to be exceptional circumstances, this may be referred to the Local Authority for advice

March 2015