

Matthew Arnold Primary School



Matthew Arnold Attendance Policy

2025-2026

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Policy produced with reference to: [DfE Guidance Working Together to Improve Attendance](#)

Introduction

At Matthew Arnold Primary School, we recognise that regular attendance at school is essential to raising standards and attainment, and to ensure children reach their full potential. The aim of this policy is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality for pupils within Matthew Arnold Primary School to support learning and achievement.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding issues. It is important to see our children every day and provide an educationally safe and secure environment.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that all pupils attend regularly and on time. Pupils should attend every day that the school is open. We set a target for all pupils to aim for 100% attendance with the expectation all pupils achieve at least 97%. *As a school we define regular attendance as 97% or above.*

Matthew Arnold Primary School believes teachers, parents, carers, pupils and all members of its school community have an important contribution in improving attendance and punctuality ensuring students attend to achieve. This policy sets out how we will achieve this together and should be read in conjunction with the Attendance Roles and Responsibilities Guidance attached to this document.

Aims

- Raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community
- Maximise the overall percentage of pupil attendance and punctuality.
- Reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent (90% or below) or severely absent (50% or below)
- Provide support advice and guidance for parents, pupils and staff.
- Develop clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for pupils.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data.
- Ensure there is a proactive whole school approach that embeds a consistency of practice.
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children's Services, School Health and other partner agencies.

Promoting regular attendance

Attendance is everyone's responsibility, all members of staff, parent/carers and pupils.

To help us all focus on this, Matthew Arnold Primary School will ensure:

- there is a designated senior leader for championing and improving attendance;
- effective strategies are in place to deter poor punctuality;
- an engaging curriculum is provided and will be reviewed regularly;
- high quality teaching and learning is delivered throughout the school;
- pupils are provided with appropriate support from school and partner agencies to minimise disaffection from school;
- vulnerable groups are provided with effective support at the earliest opportunity and attendance is monitored rigorously;
- effective partnerships with parent/carers are encouraged through regular contact and support provided;
- parents/carers are kept informed of pupil attendance and punctuality through the school's attendance procedures, termly progress reports, individual letters and meetings when required;
- good attendance and punctuality is rewarded through regular individual pupil incentives;
- attendance and punctuality is regularly discussed with children in assemblies;
- attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff should ensure these are followed.

A child not attending school is considered to be a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence from school is required.

Attendance Rewards

Whole Class Prizes

Get a Gold Star in your Class Jar

- Each class have a jar in their classroom. Each time a class has 100% attendance in a day (must be here for registration), they receive a gold star. This is announced over our school tannoy system and celebrated. The gold stars build up and equate to whole class prizes.
- An attendance trophy and fruit platter is awarded the class with the best attendance at the end of every week. This is awarded during Friday assembly time and the fruit platter is delivered to class during the afternoon.

Individual prizes

- Bronze, silver and gold awards/prizes are available for children who maintain a 100% attendance. This is a fantastic achievement and is celebrated and awarded during assembly

Expectations of Parent/Carer

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

We expect parents to:

- Ensure your child arrives for school on time.
- Telephone school if your child is to be late.
- For routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments please ensure they are made outside of school hours and confirmation of the appointment is provided.
- Contact school by 9am on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend, giving an indication of the expected duration and return date to school.
- If a text message/phone call is received as a result of your child's absence, it is important that you respond to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- Contact the office if the reason for absence requires a more personal contact.
- In case of emergency we need up to date contact numbers at all times so please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers. (As a school we request a minimum of three emergency contact details be provided)
- Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing to the Headteacher and can only be authorised by the Head teacher. Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school, include general holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts, well-being days and birthdays.

What is Expected of School

School has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils. If a pupil is absent, we will:

Reception to Year 6

- The start of the school day is 8.50am. The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from 8.50am, the registers will be collected from classes at 9.00am.
- Any late pupils should enter the school through the main entrance. If any pupil arrives late, the office staff will record details in a late book. The record should show name of the pupil, class and time. The register officially closes at 9.20am any pupil arriving after this time will be marked absent for this session. A reason for the lateness will need to be provided and a decision made by the school to mark it as an authorised or unauthorised absence.
- All registers are monitored daily each morning for absences. If your child is absent with no reason recorded, our Attendance Officer will contact families (First Day Response) to ascertain information with regards to the absence.
- At 9.10am a text message will be sent to the parent / carer of all pupils absent, requesting that school be contacted with a reason for absence. If the school is not contacted the Learning Mentor / Attendance Officer will phone the parent / carer of any absent pupil between 9.15am and 9.30am.
- If the parent / carer cannot be contacted, school will phone other contacts numbers if no contact can be made and a reason for absence is not provided members of the Senior Leadership Team will do a home visit to ensure the safety of the child and to find a reason for absence and ensure the safety of the child.
- If you have told school, why your child is absent but they are off school for a number of days school may phone to check on how they are. We may also make a home welfare visit to see how they are.

- The school afternoon session starts at 1.00pm, the register will be taken again and will be collected at 1.05pm.
- School closes at 3.20pm.
- Reasons for absence will be recorded using the Department for Education's attendance codes.

MAPS 2-year-old provision and Nursery

- All registers are monitored daily each morning / afternoon for absences. If your child is absent with no reason recorded, our Attendance Officer will contact families (First Day Response) to ascertain information with regards to the absence.
- MAPS and school nursery morning sessions begin at 8.40am. At 8.50am a text message will be sent to the parent / carer of all pupils absent, requesting that school be contacted with a reason for absence. If the school is not contacted the Attendance Officer will phone the parent / carer of any absent pupil from 9.00am.
- MAPS and school nursery afternoon sessions begin at 12.30pm. At 12.45pm a text message will be sent to the parent / carer of all pupils absent, requesting that school be contacted with a reason for absence. If the school is not contacted the Attendance Officer will phone the parent / carer of any absent pupil between 12.50 and 1.15pm.
- If the parent / carer cannot be contacted, school will phone other contacts numbers if no contact can be made and a reason for absence is not provided members of the Senior Leadership Team will do a home visit to ensure the safety of the child and to find a reason for absence and ensure the safety of the child.
- If you have told school why your child is absent but they are off school for a number of days school may phone to check on how they are. We may also make a home welfare visit to see how they are.
- Reasons for absence will be recorded using the Department for Education's attendance codes.

Understanding types of attendance

Matthew Arnold Primary School has to legally record every absence. This is why it is important that parents/carers directly inform school regarding the reason for absence, on the first day of absence.

Authorised absence

Authorised absence - the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. It is the Headteacher, not parents who make the decision to authorise absence from school.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness (where the child is too unable to attend school) and medical/dental appointments
- 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 and provides medical evidence to support (e.g. evidence of hospital / dentist appointment)

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 and attend school prior to / after the appointment.

- 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

Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence - when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence following a parental request. This includes but is not exclusive to:

- parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as: birthdays, feeling tired; a duvet or well-being day, parent unwell to bring them to school
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have not been explained;
- pupils who arrive after the close of registration.

This type of absence may lead to the use of Penalty Notices or other sanctions from the Local Authority. From September 2018 can issue warning letters (in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct) to parents where their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any one term. The warning period will cover a period of 20 school days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time the school will refer the case to the local authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued.

Persistent absence

Pupils are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DfE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DfE expects schools to intervene well before pupils reach a level of persistent absence.

Whilst we understand that pupils can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. If a pupil is reluctant to attend or a parent/carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school as soon as possible to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution.

Parent/Carers are asked to contact the office (0151 539 0300) in the first instance. We will be able to talk about a return plan with you which should help and assist.

Severe absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of school are classified as being severely absent by the Department of Education (DfE) This cohort of pupils are a priority group for Matthew Arnold Primary School and additional support may be required from the local authority and partner agencies to support your child improving their attendance. It is essential that parents/carers work in partnership with the school and its partners, to ensure their child receives the support they require to overcome any barriers that are preventing them from attending school.

Why regular attendance?

Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect pupils' learning. Pupils who have time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

90% attendance is equivalent to a pupil missing one half day per week or approximately 118 lessons per year

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The Education Welfare Officer – provides support for parents/carer and advice on problems relating to attendance, and encourages good communications between home and school. The Education Welfare Officer will:

- Review attendance with school every fortnight and investigate any pupils identified as cause for concern.
- Work with the school to analyse the attendance of any child below 95%, if under the persistent absence level of 90% appropriate action will be taken.

- Write to the parents of any pupil identified as having attendance problems. The pupil's attendance will be monitored closely and if there appears to be no improvement the parents of the pupil will be invited to a meeting to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the pupil from attending.
- Make home visits when there is a serious cause for concern over attendance.

The EWO will always try to resolve the situation by agreement with the family. However, if a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists (as under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act of 1996) the EWO will be required to consider the instigation of legal proceedings which include Parenting Contracts Penalty Notices (after 10 unauthorised days), Parental Prosecution and Education Supervision Orders.

Details regarding attendance law, penalty fines and legal interventions are available from the local authority.

Legal Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The head teacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days. If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160.

Leave of absence in term time

The Law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in truly exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Parents/carers can receive a Penalty Notice for taking their child on holiday during term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they can miss work and late arriving pupils disrupt lessons. It can be embarrassing for the pupil arriving late and can encourage future absence.

How we manage lateness

- School starts at 8.50am. The school day starts and registers are taken by 9am by the class teacher. Pupils receive a late mark if they are not in their class by that time.
- If a pupil arrives late to school parents/carers will receive a text message/telephone call to inform them of their child's late arrival.
- Late arrival to school following the close of registers is classified as an absence. If a pupil is persistently late after the official close of the register, the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice. The close of registration for Matthew Arnold Primary School is 9.20am.

If a parent/carer has any problem getting their child to attend school on time they should contact the office who will offer support to resolve the problem.

Removal from roll

From the 1st September 2016 changes were introduced to the Pupil Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

As a school we are now required to:

Inform the LA in **every** circumstance when deleting a pupil's name from the admission register. Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school. School must complete an Exit form and submit to the CME@liverpool.gov.uk inbox.

- provide information to the LA when registering new pupils, including the pupil's address and previous school

If your child is leaving our school parents are asked to:

- provide the school/attendance officer with comprehensive information about their plans, including: any date of a move; your new address and telephone numbers; your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to school in writing;
- if a pupil leaves and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which may include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

People responsible for attendance matters at Matthew Arnold Primary School

All school staff, parents/carers and pupils need to work as a team to support the attendance and

achievement of pupils. This continued support therefore is vital in making every pupil's journey through school a success.

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Attendance Monitoring

The Deputy Headteacher is the attendance lead and is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school

- The attendance lead monitors absence daily to identify children at risk of becoming a persistent absentee. They compare the attendance of different cohorts within the school.
- All staff are aware of children in their class who have been / are at risk of becoming a persistent absentee.
- When a child's attendance drops below 92% a letter is sent to parents to make them aware their child's attendance is dropping and is a concern.
- Every fortnight The EWO works with the attendance lead to view attendance within school and investigate any pupils identified as cause for concern.

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

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

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

Appendices – *working towards best practice*
Attendance and Punctuality Roles and Responsibilities Guidance

When	Whom	Actions Expected
DAILY	Pupils	Arrive on school site for the start of the school day at 8.50am
	Class Teacher	Registers are completed by 9am and ready to be collected and returned to the office Ensure attendance has a high profile in class Use Dojo reward system to promote good attendance Discuss absence with pupils returning to school
	Office Staff	Ensuring staff have completed AM/PM registers Ensuring input of accurate attendance marks in the register via MIS Identify pupils who are absent from school without reason (from 9am) Log on MIS, parental voicemails, text messages and emails regarding student absences Ensure all late arriving pupils are spoken to and their attendance is recorded in the late file and entered on to MIS Text messages sent to parent/carers who have failed to contact regarding their child's absence. First day response phone contact with parents/carers, following up unexplained absences where no text message/phone call has been returned. SLT and class teachers contacted with specific attendance queries and necessary follow ups required Logging attendance of all pupils going out /in school for medical, dental or visits Daily liaison with other settings for pupils educated off site to ensure AM and PM registers are provided within set time parameters and pupils who fail to attend with reasons unknown are followed up through the first day contact systems. Daily Late process, log and send actions for relevant staff. Daily Attendance information sent to Attendance Lead and DSL for attendance.
	Pastoral Staff	Work with targeted pupils Support SLT with home visits when no contact has been made / pupils have been off for a length of time
	EWO	Home visits / safeguarding home visits as required. Focused casework interventions with persistent absence pupils and families. Phone call contact with pupils/parent/carers Instigation of legal proceedings Tracking of actions and interventions and feedback to DSL for attendance.
	SLT / Designated Senior Leader	Monitoring and tracking of staff not completing registers in line with safeguarding requirements. Home visits when no contact has been made / pupils have been off for a length of time Liaise with EWO, Pastoral staff and Curriculum Leaders regarding support work with identified pupils. Ensure that the attendance policy is implemented across the school and that systems are operating effectively.

When	Whom	Actions Expected
WEEKLY	Class teacher	Ensure all members of the class know the school target and their current attendance Monitor/follow up identified pupil absence by contacting parent/carers where appropriate. Use Dojo reward system to promote good attendance
	Office Staff	Informing SLT of pupil patterns of absence. Provide weekly pupil attendance figures for DSL for attendance, class teachers and pupil rewards Discuss punctuality issues with identified pupils and parent/carers
	Designated Senior Leader	Liaison with EWO, pastoral staff and class teachers regarding support work with identified pupils Ensure all staff know their class % attendance for the previous week Inform class teachers of SA / PA in their class Inform class teachers of 'margin children' to be a focus the following week (88-90%, 90-92%) Send letters to 'margin' pupils 90-92% to make aware of PA Determine priority actions for the following week Maintain a high profile of attendance as a significant contributor to pupil achievement

When	Whom	Actions Expected
HALF TERMLY	Designated Senior Leader	Use attendance data to identify and act to improve the attendance of vulnerable pupils Ensure that all teaching staff focus on attendance in planning and pedagogy Determine priority actions for the next half term Monitor and track attendance SA / PA Liaise with EWO to share information and agree joint actions re action plans or other pupils causing concern Half termly attendance report for governors

TERMILY	Designated Senior Leader	Ensure the importance of attendance is underpinned by awareness of safeguarding issues for all pupils both in school and those at off site provision School Attendance Review alongside the EWO Ensure that attendance is given a high profile as a key driver of school improvement and provide support and guidance to SLT, for plans to raise attendance Report to HT / governors on attendance Ensure that attendance features in ALL parents' evenings (MAPs to Y6)
	Head-teacher	Ensure that attendance maintains a high profile as a key driver of school improvement through close monitoring and scrutiny of attendance data in conjunction with SLT and Governors