



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Mount St Mary's Catholic High School Attendance Policy

Adopted by Mount St Marys' Governing Body on 22 November 2022

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe E. P.', is written over a horizontal line.

Chair of Governors

Review date: 22 November 2025

Aims and Purpose – Why Attendance Matters at Mount St Mary’s

Our mission is to ensure personal growth and individual achievement whilst providing extensive opportunities for the development of the whole individual.

At MSM, attending school every day and accessing entitlement to a full time education is viewed as a habit that is required to succeed in the world of work. This culture aims to develop our young people by challenging, driving and supporting them so that they are well prepared for their life beyond MSM and are ultimately able to pursue a successful career in their chosen pathway.

1. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [School Attendance Guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on [School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

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

This policy also refers to the DfE’s guidance on the [School Census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

2. Recording of Attendance

Form tutors have the responsibility of taking the morning register and ensuring this is entered in the School Information Monitoring System (SIMS) between 8.40am and 9.00am each day:

- Students who arrive on time at 8.40am will be marked present using code /.
- Students who arrive between 8.40am and 9.00am will be marked late using code L.
- Students who are absent will be given code N until the reason for absence is ascertained.
- Students on dual registration with another provider will be given code D.
- Students attending offsite provision will be given code B unless the provision inform us that the student has not attended, in which case, the code will be amended to O.

Between 9.00am and 10.00am, the Pastoral Support Officer (PSO) checks that all registers for their year group are complete and that any students allocated an N code are followed up. Once the PSO has made contact with parents/carers, the N code will be amended to reflect the reason for absence – see Appendix 1. If the PSO is unable to make contact with a responsible adult then an O code will be applied and, if deemed necessary, safeguarding procedures implemented.

By 10.00am, all N codes are cleared and every student on the school site is accounted for.

3. Classification of Absence

There is a team of staff that are on site from 7am until 4pm who work tirelessly to establish the cause of an absence from school. This includes the Pastoral Support Office staff in each year team, the Student Advocate team for targeted students, the Attendance Engagement Officer and the Attendance Improvement Office. The 2 main forms of communication that we use to establish any classification of absence is verbal, telephone communication or electronic communication via MyEd. The electronic communication tool is open 24 hours a day for parents to inform school of any absences but this will be checked verbally by staff to establish how we then classify any absence.

4. Strategies for Improving Attendance and Punctuality

We have a team of 8 staff who deal with student attendance on a daily basis. If a student is absent, a member of the team will contact the family to determine the reason for absence and, if necessary, discuss strategies for a swift return. In open communications and discussions with families, we seek to find creative solutions to the challenges some students face by reducing any form of absence from school.

We use a range of strategies which are highlighted below:

- Daily contact from the relevant Pastoral Support Office.
- Home visits from the Student Advocate Team, the Attendance Engagement Officer (AEO), Safer Schools Officer and key members of the wider staff team.
- Informal Attendance Contracts after 3 and then 5 days of unauthorised absence.
- Formal Attendance Contracts and Attendance Panels after 7 days of unauthorised absence.
- Legal proceedings with referrals to Leeds City Council.
- Governor and Headteacher Attendance Panels.
- Legal proceedings with referrals to Education Supervision Order Children's Act 1989, application to the family court and/or Prosecution of Parents Education Act 1996, section 444/444a Parenting order, School Attendance order.

5. Analysis of Data

As a school, we have a range of attendance data available to us. This is forensically scrutinised on a daily and weekly basis to identify individuals and groups of students who are at risk of being absent from school.

This data, coupled with Attendance Team discussions, triggers a range of actions that are designed to challenge and support students and their families in order to reduce any absence from education.

6. Rewards and Incentives

There are several ways that students are rewarded for improved or outstanding attendance. Recognition may take place during registration with their Form Tutor, in weekly assemblies or end of term reward assemblies. Excellent attendance is also a criteria for the end of year reward trips and student leadership positions. It is also a prerequisite for post 16 education, employment and training provider applications.

We regularly check and highlight a student's attendance streak – how many days in a row have you attended without breaking your streak? Streaks are also recorded daily by students in their student organisers, so that they are aware of their current attendance performance.

7. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Unplanned Absence

Parents/carers must notify school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.45am or as soon as is practically possible.

At approximately 10.00am each day, a text will be sent to parents/carers notifying them that their child is absent from school. At this point, parents/carers must confirm the reason for absence unless they have already done so.

We will authorise absence due to illness for up to 7 days per school year unless we have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If this is in doubt, we may ask parents/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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

If a student is placed on an attendance contract, we will not authorise any absence without medical evidence.

Planned Absence

Providing we are notified in advance of the appointment, attendance at medical or dental appointments will be authorised. However, we encourage parents/carers to make these appointments out of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, students should be absent from school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

For any other planned absences, e.g family weddings, funerals etc, parents/carers should notify the relevant year office in advance by completing a Request for Exceptional Leave of Absence Form and providing any supporting documentation. These requests must be made as far in advance as possible; it is at the discretion of the Headteacher as to whether these requests are authorised – see Approval for Term-Time Absence.

Lateness and Punctuality

School registration opens at 8.40am and is closed at 9.00am. A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code L.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code O.

Following up Absence

When any student does not attend, or stops attending, the school will contact their parents/carers to ascertain the reasons for an absence. Usually, this involves communication with home from the student's year office, however, this may also include a home visit if we are concerned about a child's absence, alongside any other appropriate safeguarding actions deemed necessary. Once facts have been established as to the reasons for any absence or lateness the attendance team, in collaboration with senior leaders, will decide whether or not to authorise the absence and issue the appropriate code.

Reporting to Parents

We will regularly update parents on their child's attendance by one of the methods below:

- 100% Club e-certificates.
- Annual written reports.
- Pastoral data, including attendance and punctuality is shared and used with families at Parents' Evenings or Progress Review Days.
- Attendance streaks (number of unbroken days in a row that students have attended).
- Informal attendance contracts if a student has 3 or more days of unauthorised absence.

Approval for Term-Time Absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to students during term time if the request is considered to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion.

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

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, we will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision.

8. Legal Sanctions

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

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

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

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

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

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

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

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

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Students

A student's responsibility is to attend school every day of the school year.

Parents

A parent is legally required to ensure that their child attends school every day. If this is not possible, they must inform the school of the reason for absence and work with the relevant year office or member of the attendance team by providing any necessary supporting evidence. Only when this evidence has been seen will we authorise any absence from school.

Form Tutors

The role of the form tutor is to support students' entry to school by ensuring they have created a 'ready' environment for a successful start to the day. Form tutors have the responsibility of taking the morning register and ensuring this is entered in the School Information Monitoring System (SIMS) before 9.00am.

Subject Teachers

Subject staff or lesson staff are required to mark the register for every 50-minute lesson period. This is entered electronically into SIMS via Lesson Monitor. Subject staff must alert the relevant year office or the school main reception should they find that a student marked present during registration is not present in their lesson.

Pastoral Support Officer

Between 9.00am and 10.00am, the Pastoral Support Officer (PSO) checks that all registers for their year group are complete and that any students with missing marks are followed up.

The PSOs will communicate with parents/carers to establish a reason for student absence and determine whether or not the absence is authorised. If there are any concerns regarding absent students, the PSO will notify members of the safeguarding team immediately.

By 10.00am, every student on the school site is accounted for.

Student Advocate

The Student Advocate (SA) is part of a team who are responsible for vulnerable and potentially vulnerable individuals; some SAs are also Form Tutors. At times, they may be required to communicate with families and friends to establish the location of an individual; this could include home visits with another member of the SA team, the Safer Schools Officer or the Attendance Engagement Officer.

Attendance Engagement Officer

As a member of the Attendance Improvement Team, the Attendance Engagement Officer (AEO) has overall responsibility for student attendance. The AEO will also engage and communicate with specific cohorts of students and families with a view to reducing absences and developing student engagement with school provision. The AEO will hold regular meetings with these cohorts in order to find solutions to attendance problems and issue any necessary attendance contracts to support students. Should it be deemed necessary, the AEO will refer any failed attendance contracts to senior leaders and possibly Leeds City Council.

Attendance Improvement Team

Each day, the Attendance Improvement Team (AIT) work with the PSOs, SAs and the AEO in order to establish which students are absent from school and why; the AIT will then communicate with families via the MyEd App and text in order to establish reasons for absence. The AIT will check SIMS each lesson period, investigating and communicating any unexpected absence from lessons with staff. At 10am they are responsible for texting parents if students are currently absent from school, where the school is unaware of this absence that day. Working in partnership with the AEO, PSO's and SA's, the AIT will collate any evidence needed for attendance referrals to senior leaders and Leeds City Council.

Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: -

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health & Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

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

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff. Regular home visits will be made by school staff and the safeguarding team if students have regular absence or if we have not seen a student for at least 3 days without any communication from parent/carers.

Children missing in Education

In line with Leeds City Council policy on safeguarding of children, any student who has not been seen for 20 school days in school, or at home during regular home visits for students who are absent without communication with home, will be referred to Leeds City Council's Children Missing in Education team.

Leaders of Attendance

The Leaders of Attendance (LA) ensure that school attendance is recorded, monitored and communicated with a range of stakeholders effectively and efficiently on a daily basis. The LA oversee the structure of the AIT and the roles and responsibilities of those who make up the team. The LA will forensically check attendance data on a daily basis, ensuring actions are taken to establish reasons for absence and follow up any safeguarding concerns.

11. Coding of Attendance Appendix 1


The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness


M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day



MSM
ATTENDANCE

encouraging every student to attend school every day



MSM

How can you achieve and maintain high standards of attendance?

OWN your streaks

A STREAK IS THE NUMBER OF DAYS IN A ROW WITHOUT AN ABSENCE. THE LONGEST STREAK IS REWARDED

be in the 100% club

100% CLUB RESTARTS EVERY HALF TERM

be Responsible

TAKE OWNERSHIP OF BEING IN SCHOOL AND ON TIME EVERY DAY

be Reflective

ARE YOU HAPPY WITH YOUR ATTENDANCE? HOW CAN IT BE IMPROVED?

be Resilient

DO YOU NEED TO BE ABSENT FROM SCHOOL? CAN YOU TRY YOUR BEST TO BE IN?

ENGAGE WITH SUPPORT AND EARLY INTERVENTION

0-3 days absence
Support: All staff

3 days of unauthorised absence
Support: PSO Informal Contract

5 days of unauthorised absence
Support: Year Leader Informal Contract

7 days of unauthorised absence
Support: School Attendance Panel Meeting Attendance Team and Assistant Headteacher

Continued unauthorised absence
Referral to Local Authority and possible Fixed Penalty Notice

UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT YOUR ABSENCE HAS ON YOUR LOST LEARNING TIME

17 DAYS OF ABSENCE EQUALS 1 GRADE LOST AT GCSE

ON TARGET	100%	96% =	7	SCHOOL DAYS MISSED =	35 HOURS OF LOST LEARNING
IMPROVEMENT NEEDED	93%	93% =	13	SCHOOL DAYS MISSED =	65 HOURS OF LOST LEARNING
CONCERNS	90%	90% =	19	SCHOOL DAYS MISSED =	95 HOURS OF LOST LEARNING
PERSISTENT ABSENCE	85%	85% =	29	SCHOOL DAYS MISSED =	145 HOURS OF LOST LEARNING
SEVERE ABSENCE	75%	75% =	46	SCHOOL DAYS MISSED =	230 HOURS OF LOST LEARNING