

# ST. MARGARET CLITHEROW ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



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## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Ownership:** Curriculum Committee

Document Date: November 2020

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Review Date: November 2021

Pupils are given many opportunities to serve each other, the school and the wider community, developing their own skills and talents in the process.



**Section 48 Diocesan Inspection October 2018**

“Pupils make rapid progress because they are very keen to learn, and because the teaching is highly effective ... Behaviour is excellent. Pupils get along very well and enjoy school, accepting one another’s different views...”



**Ofsted March 2013**

*At St Margaret Clitherow School we are committed to Safeguarding Children*

*Jesus lives in us, our families, our school, our Church, our world. Jesus is our guide, let us follow Him*

## **1. Policy Aims**

St. Margaret Clitherow School aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all students are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

## **2. Statutory Framework**

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below).

## **3. Parents'/Carers' Responsibilities**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly (Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996), punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are requested to notify the school by 9.30am. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent. If the school deems the explanation to be unacceptable, this absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff. The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently. Parents will be informed by the school in the first instance if children are regularly late.

## **4. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)**

As from 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020 St Margaret Clitherow School will be introducing fixed penalty notices as part of our whole school approach to improving attendance.

Penalty notices may be issued once a pupil has accrued 15 or more sessions (a session = a half day) of unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous school term. The absences may have occurred in a block or a series of odd days and/or unauthorised holiday. The amount payable is £60 (per parent) if paid within 21 days or £120 (per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. Separate notices are issued to each parent in respect of each child. If the penalty notice remains unpaid after 28 days the Local Authority will prosecute parents for the original offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Parents need to be aware that this is a criminal offence and upon conviction they may receive a fine of up to £2,500 (each parent) and will have a criminal record.

Further information on penalty notices is available at [www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/attendance.shtml](http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/attendance.shtml)

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added two new sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable

parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures. It is particularly useful as a sanction at an early stage before attendance problems become entrenched and where the Local Authority considers that a prosecution would not be appropriate as a first action.

## 5. **Registration**

Classroom doors open at 8.45am and pupils are able to come into class from this time to start their 'early work'; the school day officially starts at 8.50am (9:00am for Nursery). **Due to COVID-19 we are operating a staggered start to the school day and school officially starts at 9:05am.**

Registers will be marked promptly at 8:55am (**due to COVID-19 registers are marked at 9:05am**) and at 1:15 pm and in accordance with the list of symbols as set out in the register form sheet (see Appendix 1). Registers will officially close at 9:20 am and at 1:20 pm.

If a pupil arrives after their name has been called in the register but before 9am they will be marked as 'late' in the formal register.

If a pupil fails to arrive before the registers close, he/she will be marked as 'absent' for the full session. The secretary will amend the register entry as 'unauthorised absent' if a sufficient and valid reason is not presented (only the headteacher may authorize such an absence). Late arrivals should sign the Late Book in the main office which is used in the event of an emergency evacuation.

If a pupil is persistently late, or is regularly marked as unauthorised absent due to lateness, the Headteacher will contact the parents.

The Headteacher, in consultation with the Attendance Improvement Officer, will inspect the live digital registers regularly in order to ensure that correct procedures are being followed. Attendance software enables the school to maintain very up-to-date records and is instantly accessible to teachers and the Headteacher.

### **Authorised/Unauthorised Absence**

It is vital that all staff adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

St. Margaret Clitherow School will decide on how an absence is to be recorded according to 'School Attendance: Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence' (DFE 1994). This states that:

#### **Absence can be authorised if:**

- The pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school').
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- The school is not within walking distance of the child's home, and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following:

- the child's transport to and from school,
  - boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school, and
  - enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home.
- There is a family bereavement.
  - The pupil is visiting another school for a legitimate reason.
  - The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity
  - The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit.
  - The pupil is participating in an approved public performance.
  - The pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion (e.g. if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling).

Absence should be **unauthorised** if:

- No explanation is forthcoming.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances).
- The pupil is shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (e.g. a birthday).
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday that does not meet exceptional circumstances that have been agreed in advance.

## 6. Leave of absence during term time

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance at school. Changes in legislation in 2013 made it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Therefore holidays during term time, including leave to visit family living overseas, may not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances which can be evidenced.

### Exceptional circumstances might include:

- for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holiday outside term-time if the holiday will have minimal disruption of the pupil's education;
- when a family needs limited time to spend together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- attendance at a funeral or wedding of a close relative; and
- attendance at the graduation award of a parent or sibling;

### Exceptional circumstance, according to the Department for Education **do not include:**

- financial considerations such as the availability of cheap holidays;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods;
- overlap with beginning or end of term; and
- visiting family living overseas.

All parents will be asked to complete an application form (Appendix 2) prior to a decision being made asking for documentary evidence of the exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher may consult with a nominated Governor where decisions are complex. Advice from the Local Authority may also be sought.

## **7. Procedures for Following up Absence**

- The school operates a first day response system whereby unexplained absences will be followed up with a telephone call by 10.30am on the first day of absence. If contact is not possible at this time, messages will be left and the Headteacher will be alerted. If there are concerns about the well-being of a child, the school may attempt to visit the home in person or may request a Police Welfare Check on the family.
- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Headteacher will write to the parents and invite them to attend a meeting at school.
- If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence without a satisfactory explanation from the parent, the Headteacher will write to the parents.
- If a pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Attendance and Pupil Support Service during his/her consultation visit. This could result in a fixed penalty notice (Subsection (1) of Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act) or legal action (Education Act 1996).
- Notes from parents will be kept in the office. All messages regarding absence/lateness are to be recorded in the absence book.

## **8. Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

- St. Margaret Clitherow School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- A broad and balanced curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning objectives are matched to pupils' needs.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice.
- Good attendance awards will be presented at the end of each school year.
- Pupils whose attendance is a cause of concern will be set targets for improvement. The class teacher will monitor and review these targets.
- Parents will be regularly reminded (via newsletters, the school prospectus, parents' evenings, etc) of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them.
- The Headteacher will include attendance data on the termly reports to governors.
- Review progress towards attendance target annually.
- Report data termly.
- The Headteacher will, when appropriate, liaise with other agencies - Educational Psychology Service, Social Services, Child and Family Guidance, etc - when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

The Headteacher will have regular contact with the school's Attendance Improvement Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

## **9. The Use of Legal Action**

If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school), the LA will serve a School Attendance Order under Sections 437 - 439 of the Education Act 1996.

If a pupil, who is registered at a school, fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance. If 'exceptional mitigating circumstances' are not deemed to exist then cases which remain open for more than 24 weeks will be referred for legal action. Legal action will, however, be taken earlier when appropriate.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the AIO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.

In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at effecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Team will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance, will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced.

The Attendance Team will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored;
- the attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted the AIO will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school .

## **10. Children Missing in Education**

Local Authorities have a duty to establish, as far as possible to do so, the identity of children missing from education. Schools have a duty to assist the Local authority in this. Please see Appendix 2 for details.

# Appendix 1: HCC Attendance Codes & their meaning

| CODE | DESCRIPTION   | MEANING                             |
|------|---|-------------------------------------|
| /    | Present (AM)  | Present                             |
| \    | Present (PM)  | Present                             |
| B    | Present at off site educational activity                        | Approved Education Activity         |
| C    | Leave of absence authorised by the school                       | Authorised absence                  |
| D    | Dual registered at another educational establishment            | Not expected to attend this session |
| E    | Excluded (no alternative provision made)                        | Authorised absence                  |
| G    | Holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)      | Unauthorised absence                |
| H    | Holiday authorised by the school                                | Authorised absence                  |
| I    | Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)               | Authorised absence                  |
| J    | Interview   | Approved Education Activity         |
| L    | Late (before registers closed)                                  | Present                             |
| M    | Medical/Dental appointments                                     | Authorised absence                  |
| N    | No reason yet provided for absence                              | Unauthorised absence                |
| O    | Other unauthorised absence                                      | Unauthorised absence                |
| P    | Supervised sporting activity                                    | Approved Education Activity         |
| R    | Day set aside exclusively for religious observance              | Authorised absence                  |
| S    | Study leave   | Authorised absence                  |
| T    | Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational reasons      | Authorised absence                  |
| U    | Late and arrived after the registers closed                     | Unauthorised absence                |
| V    | Educational visit or trip                                       | Approved Education Activity         |
| W    | Work experience   | Approved Education Activity         |
| X    | Not required to be in school (non-compulsory school age pupils) | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Y    | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances               | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Z    | Pupil not on admission register                                 | Not counted in possible attendances |
| #    | School closed to all pupils (Planned)                           | Not counted in possible attendances |

Detailed advice on the use of these registration codes can be found at [www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance](http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance)

# Appendix 2

## ST MARGARET CLITHEROW ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Monkswood Lane (off Monkswood Way) Stevenage Herts SG2 8QJ

Headteacher:  
Carmela Puccio (B.A Hons)



Tel: 01438 352863

Website: [www.clitherow.herts.sch.uk](http://www.clitherow.herts.sch.uk)  
Email: [admin@clitherow.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@clitherow.herts.sch.uk)

### Leave for Exceptional Circumstances Application Form

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance at school. Changes to legislation in 2013 make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Holidays in term time can disrupt the educational progress and interrupt continuity of teaching and learning. If you wish to ask the Headteacher to authorise leave for exceptional circumstances please complete this form. A nominated Governor may be consulted by the Headteacher in relation to applications. Requests will only be authorised where there is evidence of exceptional circumstances. Application must be made prior to the absence being taken. You will receive a copy of this completed form when a decision has been made. Should you wish to discuss the decision further, please make an appointment. The Headteacher may ask to meet with you in order to discuss the application and/or his/her decision.

If you remove your child from school without approval, their absence will be documented as unauthorised and may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued from the Local Authority.

|  |  |            |  |
|--|--|------------|--|
| Name of Child(ren):  |  | Class(es): |  |
| I am applying for leave of absence for my child(ren) for the following reason/s:   |  |            |  |
| From:  |  | To:        |  |
| Number of days my child(ren) will be absent from school:   |  |            |  |
| This <b>cannot</b> be taken during the school holidays because:  |  |            |  |
| Evidence of exceptional circumstances:<br><i>you may attach any other documentation evidence if you feel this would help us to make a fair decision.</i> |  |            |  |
| Has your child already had leave of absence in this school year: YES/NO  |  |            |  |
| Has your child had any leave of absence in previous years: YES/NO<br>If yes, please give details   |  |            |  |
| Signed:  |  | Date:      |  |
| Printed:   |  |            |  |



To be completed by the Headteacher and returned to the parent

Child's attendance (%) and number of missed sessions in the current academic year:

Child's attendance (%) and number of missed sessions in the last academic year:

Leave of absence taken in previous academic year(s):

| Child's Name | Academic Year | Year Group | Attendance % | No. of sessions | Authorised/Not authorised |
|--------------|---------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
|              |               |            |              |                 |                           |
|              |               |            |              |                 |                           |
|              |               |            |              |                 |                           |
|              |               |            |              |                 |                           |
| Child's Name | Academic Year | Year Group | Attendance % | No. of sessions | Authorised/Not authorised |
|              |               |            |              |                 |                           |
|              |               |            |              |                 |                           |
|              |               |            |              |                 |                           |
|              |               |            |              |                 |                           |

Headteacher's comments:

Having considered your request carefully, my decision is that leave of absence is:

Approved – the absence will be recorded as authorised

Not Approved – if taken, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised

Signed:

Carmela Puccio, Headteacher

Date:

**For office use only**

Copy sent to parent


Data entered on SIMS

Copy in pupil folder

## Appendix 3

### Children Missing from Education

#### **Children Missing from Education (CME) Guidance (CS 4706) and Referral Form (CS 4707)**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>PUBLICATION SCHEDULE NUMBER:</b>     | <b>CS 4706 and CS 4707</b>   |
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| <b>PUBLISHED by:</b>                    | <b>Children's Services, Integrated Services for Learning</b>                       |

# **Children Missing from Education (CME) Guidance (CS 4706) and Referral Form (CS 4707)**

## **Introduction**

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, child sexual exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Local authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age\*.

Arrangements made under section 436A also play an important role in fulfilling the local authority's wider safeguarding duties. This guidance does not replace any Child Protection Procedures. Existing safeguarding procedures and mechanisms for reporting and recording child protection concerns are to be observed at all times.

Department for Education guidance makes it clear that in carrying out this duty, local authorities must have in place arrangements for joint working and information sharing with other local authorities and partner agencies. It also states that all agencies which come into contact with children must cooperate with the local authority's arrangements for identifying children thought to be missing from education.

This document sets out what Hertfordshire County Council staff and school staff should do when a child believed to be missing from education comes to their attention.

Separate guidance is available for schools on Herts Grid for Learning [www.thegrid.org.uk](http://www.thegrid.org.uk) about the legitimate removal of pupils from a school roll. A child legitimately removed from roll is not in most cases missing from education and all schools, including academies and independent schools are legally required to notify the local authority when they remove/plan to remove a child from their roll.

\*A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

## **Who is a Child Missing from Education?**

A child is missing from education if they are of compulsory school age (age 5-16), do not have a school place and no alternative education arrangements have been made for them. A child is not defined as missing from education if they have a school place but are not attending regularly, if they are being home educated or if they attend alternative provision such as a college or Education Support Centre. Some children, often the most vulnerable, are at greater risk of going missing from education.

These vulnerable groups include:

- looked after children
- children living in women's refuges
- young runaways
- children of homeless families, perhaps living in temporary accommodation
- children with long term medical or emotional problems
- unaccompanied asylum seekers
- children of refugees or asylum seeking families
- children in new immigrant families not yet established in the UK
- children from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller background
- children who are privately fostered
- young carers
- children from transient families
- teenage mothers
- young offenders
- children permanently excluded from school

### **Children missing from education are at greater risk of:**

- physical harm
- sexual exploitation
- becoming involved in crime
- demonstrating anti-social behaviour
- abusing drugs and alcohol
- being illegally employed

It is vital therefore that the authority, schools and other agencies work closely together to help safeguard children who may be missing from education.

### **Role of the Children Missing from Education Officer (CMEO)**

The Children Missing Education Officer (CMEO) is part of Children's Services Integrated Services for Learning team and is responsible for receiving all CME referrals. The CME Officer keeps a record of all children reported as missing from education. Children are tracked until they return to suitable education.

Examples of the work undertaken by the CME Officer include:

- making enquiries of parents as to the educational arrangements they are making for their child
- ensuring parents make applications for school places

- making follow up enquiries with schools, teams and agencies within the local authority
- making visits to the last known address
- liaising with other local authorities and schools
- asking for follow up from the police and Border Force as appropriate
- issuing School Attendance orders on behalf of the local authority
- adding information to the School2School secure data system

If the child is missing from education, the CME Officer will ensure the details are passed to the appropriate team to secure suitable education. All children missing from education will be monitored by the CME Officer until such time as suitable provision is made.

### **Referral process for children believed to be missing from education**

The referral procedure for children believed to be missing from education should be followed by all Hertfordshire County Council staff and all schools and partner agencies if a child they believe to be missing from education comes to their attention.

Anyone who believes a child may be missing from education can contact the CME Officer for advice on 01992 556867. To make a referral to the CME Officer please complete and return the attached referral form to by post (or in the schools post) to the:

Children Missing Education Officer:  
 Central Attendance and Employment Support Team  
 Hertfordshire County Council  
 Room 134 CHO 136  
 County Hall  
 Pegs Lane  
 Hertford SG13 8DF

Please **DO NOT** email information containing children's details as this is not secure.

It is likely that schools receiving direct applications for admission to the school outside of the normal admissions cycle will be the first to know of children missing from education. In the event that the school is unable to offer a place, and it appears from the application that the child is not in education, a referral should be made as described above.

Following this procedure will enable the local authority to meet its statutory duties relating to the identification of children missing education, safeguarding their welfare and protecting their entitlement to education.



**Children Missing Education (CME) Referral Form**

Use this form to notify the CME Officer of any child you believe is missing from education. Do not use this form for children who have a school place but are not attending regularly or have been removed from roll.

*Please use one form per child, unless they are siblings*

Name of referrer  Date

Team/school  Contact number

Child's Name:  DOB  M/F

Child's Name:  DOB  M/F

Child's Name:  DOB  M/F

Address

Name(s) of parents/carers  Phone number

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

Other relevant information

Date child(ren) became known to referrer:

This form should be sent to the CME Officer, Central Attendance & Employment Support Team, Hertfordshire County Council, Room 134, CHO 136, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford SG13 8DF. Tel 01992 556867