

Attendance Policy
St Thomas More RC College



Approved by:	Mr H Brophy
Last reviewed on:	<u>January 2026</u>
Next review due:	

St Thomas More RC College

Attendance Policy

The greater the attendance, the greater the achievement!

Principles

We are committed to ensuring all families understand the importance of high attendance at St Thomas More RC College. Attendance in school is vital for academic success. Studies have shown that pupils with attendance below 95% fail to achieve five or more GCSEs at a grade 4, which will have an impact on their future choices beyond GCSE.

At St Thomas More RC College, we monitor attendance patterns with vigilance, and we hold parents/ carers to account when a pupil's attendance is a concern, and absences are unauthorised

At St Thomas More RC College, we focus on:

- Promoting good attendance.
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons and school.

At St Thomas More RC College, we expect all pupils to:

- Attend school every day
- Attend school punctually.
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day.

We expect all parents/carers who have day to day responsibility for the children and young people will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Ensure the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day.
- Contact the school on the morning of each day of the pupil's absence.

- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.
- Be aware that any unexplained absence is treated as an unauthorised absence and may be considered a safeguarding concern, this may result in a home visit or a referral to Children's Services.

Practice

An attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. The attendance register is a legal document, and it will be shared with the Department for Education. The attendance register will record whether each pupil is:

- Present.
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity.
- Absent.
- Late.

School will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Whether medical evidence has been received.
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity.

Punctuality and Lateness

- Pupils must arrive at school by 8.45am; morning registers are taken soon after arrival.
- Pupils arriving after 8.45am will be marked as late and if a pupil has two or more lates in a week, they will receive a 30-minute detention on a Friday.
- Lateness after registration has closed is recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) and parents/carers will be notified of this absence via a text message or phone call. Continued lateness after the Close of Registration may result in a referral to the local authority requesting a notice to improve or a penalty notice.
- Pupils late due to hospital appointments must provide a letter showing proof of the appointment from the hospital.
- In exceptional circumstances (such as severe weather or public transport disruptions) the closing of registration may be delayed at the discretion of the Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher.

Reporting an absence

- Parents and carers are expected to notify the school office of a pupil absence. In the case of illness, parents should phone the school office on the first day of the absence and then each day thereafter by 8.15am, and the school office number is **0161 336 2743** and select Option 1.

- School must be notified of the reason for a child's absence in order to safeguard the child and protect their educational well-being.
- All normal absence monitoring procedures will continue during the unexplained absence, including calling/emailing/texting the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues. This may also involve contacting the school of any siblings, home visits and reference to Children's Services.
- If a child has a Child Protection Plan, the school will notify Children's Services of the absence.
- We kindly ask parents and carers to make routine medical and dental appointments outside of school hours or in the school holidays.
- We understand that there may be unexpected and urgent medical appointments, and we will make exceptions in these circumstances and medical evidence will be requested to authorise the absence.
- If your child has to attend a medical appointment, please email l.frain@stmcollege.org.uk or bring in the medical evidence to support the absence so the attendance register can be updated accordingly.
- If the school is not satisfied with the reasons for an absence, the absence will be recorded as 'Unauthorised.' Please be aware that continued unauthorised absences may result in a penalty notice being issued from Tameside LEA.

Continued concerns about a child's attendance may result in the following:

- Implementation of a staged attendance intervention and meetings
- Home visits
- A referral to the school's Safeguarding Team, an EHA (Early Help Assessment), the school nursing service, MASH Team (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) or the police for a welfare check.
- The school may request or issue a notice to improve in order to support attendance
- A referral to the local authority could result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice, an application for an Education Supervision Order or court prosecution.

Approval for term-time absence

- The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.
- The Headteacher will consider each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.
- All parents/carers requesting a leave of absence in term time will need to complete a "Request for Leave of Absence in Term Time" form, where possible, at least six weeks before the absence and return it to the school. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absences for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. Furthermore, holidays are not permitted during term time, and a holiday will result in a penalty notice being issued.

- If a pupil's return to school is delayed due to travel issues, parents/carers must provide independent evidence of the delay, such as official documentation from the travel company or airline detailing changes to booked flights or confirmation of a cancellation.
- The school reserves the right to request medical evidence from a healthcare professional for any period of pupil absence that occurs immediately before or after a requested leave of absence or school holiday period.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (medical evidence will be requested).
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong.

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will use strategies to improve attendance, these will include:

- Using attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Communication with parents/ carers and holding them to account regarding concerns about low attendance.
- Holding regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school and concerns the school has about the pupil's welfare and educational well-being.
- Providing access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

Interventions to Support Attendance

School interventions for pupils whose attendance falls below 90% or are having sporadic days off school will typically include:

1. Head of Year and form tutors monitoring attendance (Head of Year meetings)
2. Parent/ carer communication/ meeting with key pastoral staff
3. Warning letters and communication regarding low attendance and school's concerns
4. Meetings with the Attendance Team and Deputy Headteacher
5. Creation of Attendance Plans
6. Education Welfare Officer referrals
7. Penalty Notices

Absence Procedures and Internal monitoring

- On the first day of absence, the school must be notified of the reason for the absence. If we are satisfied with the reason, we will authorise the absence. If we are not satisfied, the absence will not be authorised.
- When a pupil's attendance falls below 90% (regardless of whether absences have been authorised or not), parents are notified of the pupil's attendance percentage/ days off and informed that attendance monitoring has begun.
- Parents and carers will be contacted by the Attendance Team, and support strategies will be discussed, and parents will be made aware of the next stages in the procedure should their child's attendance fail to improve.
- The pupil's attendance is monitored for a period of time. If attendance improves during the monitoring period, we will close the case and monitor in the usual way.
- If attendance does not improve during the monitoring period, we invite parents in for a meeting where the attendance plan previously put in place is evaluated and updated with a member of the Attendance Team. This is a Stage 1 attendance meeting
- After the Stage 1 meeting, attendance is monitored for a further period of time. If unauthorised absences continue after this point, the school and Tameside Education Welfare Service will begin proceedings to issue legal penalty notices to parents.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance using the following strategies:

Educating pupils on the importance of good attendance and its impact on high academic attainment through the pastoral curriculum, assemblies and one-to-one meetings with a member of the Pastoral Team.

Educating parents on the importance of good attendance and its impact on high academic attainment through the Headteacher's newsletter and pastoral communication in school.

- Weekly MORE Points for full attendance
- Half-termly MORE Points for good attendance
- Weekly Attendance Data shared in form time, and form tutors have attendance conversations and set SMART targets with pupils.
- End of Term Attendance Award (Reward Assembly and pupils with high attendance are entered into a draw for a gift voucher)
- Attendance postcards for good attendance.
- Head of Year Rewards for good attendance.

Child Missing in Education (CME)

The national definition of CME is:

“all children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more)”.

Children are at risk of becoming CME for many reasons, such as:

1. They cease to attend due to exclusion or withdrawal: removal from roll with no destination.
2. They fail to complete a transfer between providers.
3. They are offered alternative provision but fail to access this provision.
4. They have moved into the area and are not yet registered on a school roll.

St Thomas More RC College has adopted Tameside LEA's procedures for monitoring and reporting pupils, who we believe are vulnerable and/or missing from education (CME).

Should the child be the subject of a Child Protection Plan, or should the school have child protection concerns, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Lead will immediately notify Children's Services.

We will not remove any child from our roll without consulting Tameside Council School Admissions Services, and the Education Welfare Service where appropriate. It is our policy to ensure that a place has been secured, and the pupil has enrolled at a new school before removing a pupil from roll when transfers take place

Key contact	Role
Ms O'Mullane	Deputy Headteacher/ Designated Safeguard Lead and Attendance Lead
Ms L Frain	Attendance Officer
Ms Mayson	Head of Year 7
Ms H McHugh	Head of Year 8
Ms H Pearce	Head of Year 9
Mr R Marsh	Head of Year 10
Ms D Moore	Head of Year 11
Mr A Jones	Pastoral Manager/ Attendance

All enquiries regarding attendance should be directed to l.frain@stmcollege.org.uk, or to the Admin Team at admin@stmcollege.gov.uk 0161 336 2743.