

St Thomas More VC Academy



Attendance and Punctuality

Quick Guide for Parents

Purpose

This quick guide is intended as a supplement to the St Cuthbert Trust's 'Attendance and Punctuality' policy which can be found on the Academy's website at <https://st-thomasmorehull.org.uk/>. It hopes to provide parents and carers with key information about attendance and punctuality in a clear way so that expectations are clear.

What the Government says about Attendance and Punctuality

The government expects:

- parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly (190 days per year).
- all pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

What St Thomas More VC Academy says about Attendance and Punctuality

Our policy recognises that high levels of school attendance are significant to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential.

In accordance with OFSTED guidance, St Thomas More VC Academy expects all pupils, at any one time throughout the year, to be attaining at least 96% attendance. Across an academic year this equates to no more than 5 days (10 sessions) absence. The Academy employs rewards to encourage pupils to attend regularly.

As a child's regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement, subject to section 444 of the Education Act 1996, the Academy rigorously monitors pupil attendance and takes prompt; supportive and considered action when attendance becomes a cause for concern.

If legal action is deemed necessary, the Academy makes a referral to the Local Authority who has the delegated authority to arrange the issue of a parental summons where there is evidence to support the occurrence of an offence. In most cases, the Academy initially works to improve attendance through the Penalty Notice Regulations. The Academy adheres to the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Practice in making recommendations for the issue of penalty notices.

A penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 to be paid within 28 days with payment made to the Local Authority. Further information – including the right of appeal – can be found on the Hull City Council website at <http://www.hull.gov.uk/resident/schools-and-learning/school-attendance-and-absence>.

The following table demonstrates how absence directly impacts your child's learning:

Attendance Percentage	Days missed over an average school term (approximately)	Days missed over a school year (approximately)	Which is approximately
95%	3.5	10	2 weeks
90%	6.5	20	4 weeks
85%	10	30	6 weeks
80%	13	38	8 weeks

Lateness

Our school day starts prompt at **8:50am** and morning registration closes at 9:20am.

Once the school entrance is closed, a parent/carer is required to accompany their child to the school office to be signed into the supplementary register where the reason for lateness must be recorded and may be challenged.

- Your child will be marked as 'late' if they arrive into school before registration closes (8:50am –9:20am).
- An arrival to school after registration closes (9:21am onwards) is recorded as an unauthorised absence which could be subject to formal attendance protocols if being late to school is a regular occurrence.

Academy staff strive hard to ensure each pupil within their care is taught to good and outstanding national curriculum requirements. This cannot be achieved where a child is late to school and is not ready to learn.

Lateness to school can be a very upsetting and isolating experience for a child. Children who are late to school:

- readily become identified amongst their peer group as a person who is unprepared for school and who disrupts the learning of others
- miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson which can significantly reduce achievement and
- may feel awkward arriving into a classroom when everyone else is settled

Our afternoon session starts prompt at **1pm** and afternoon registration closes immediately after the register is taken.

If your child has been taken home for lunch, an arrival back to school after 1pm is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Every Minute Counts Lateness = Lost Learning	
5 minutes late each day	3 lost school days per year
10 minutes late each day	6.5 lost school days per year
15 minutes late each day	10 lost school days per year
20 minutes late each day	13 lost school days per year
30 minutes late each day	19 lost school days per year

Absence

Procedure for Reporting Absence

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents/carers are expected to notify the Academy by telephone – or via the Academy app – by no later than 8:50am on the first day of absence **and every day thereafter**.

In accordance with safeguarding practice, unexplained absence is pursued via text message and/or telephone calls to parents/carers by 9:30am. A member of Academy staff will undertake a home visit if a child has been absent in excess of 2 days (or sooner if judged necessary) without good reason or notice.

Additional formal protocols may be initiated to identify the whereabouts of a child who has been absent for 10 consecutive days. This may involve contact with the Police; the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service (EWS) and Children's Services.

If a child is absent for 20 days or more and in line with EWS protocols, the Academy reserves the right to remove the child from roll.

Absences are recorded as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the child's absence is provided and could be subject to formal attendance protocols.

Illness

To avoid unauthorised absence, parents/carers are reminded that:

- under parental authorisation, staff can administer medication within school in line with the school's Medical Policy (see school website) to avoid children being absent unnecessarily
- following an episode of head-lice, a child should attend school immediately after the appropriate treatment is applied
- a child can attend school 24 hours after their last bout of vomiting or diarrhoea if a parent/carer considers them well enough. In the case of a bug, you may feel it appropriate to extend their time away for an additional day.

Whilst most cases of absence due to illness are short term, parents/carers still need to notify the Academy on the first day of absence **and every day thereafter**.

For prolonged or persistent absence due to illness, or where the authenticity of illness is in doubt, the Academy asks parents/carers to provide medical evidence such as prescription medication; medical appointment card; medical letter etc. However, the Academy does not expect parents/carers to request medical certificates from a GP where these incur a charge. The Academy can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied as to the authenticity of the illness and will advise parents/carers in writing of their intention to do this.

The Academy seeks to work flexibly with parents/carers in managing medical-related absence to avoid penalising children for their attendance record where this absence is related to a medical condition (Supporting children at school with medical conditions, December 2015).

Medical or Dental Appointments

Parents/carers are asked to make every effort to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours and where this is not possible, to avoid school registration periods.

A child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for an appointment and should return to school immediately after an appointment.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is only counted as an authorised absence when evidence of the appointment is presented.

Leave of Absence

Only a parent/carer who has responsibility to ensure the regular attendance of their child at school, can make written application to the Head of School for **any** leave of absence in term time. It is imperative that the 'Application – Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances' form (available from the Academy office or via the

Academy's website at <https://st-thomasmorehull.org.uk/> is completed and submitted to the Head of School for consideration providing at least one month's notice. Leave of absence is not a parental right.

Under current legislation, a Head of School is unable to authorise any leave of absence during term time. However, there may be exceptional circumstances for granting leave of absence in term time, which is determined by the Head of School.

Exceptional circumstance criteria will focus on:

- arrangements for access determined by a Court Order
- Service personnel and other employees where annual leave is dictated by an employer
- acute family crisis
- religious observance

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to within 10 days of receiving the application.

In the case of fully/partially authorised leave of absence, the Head of School determines the number of days a child can be away from school and will state when the child is expected to return to school. Parents/carers are expected to contact the school immediately if there is an unexpected cause for delay from the stated date of return.

Where the decision is made not to grant/only partially grant a leave of absence request and the leave is taken without prior approval – or without application – this absence is classed as unauthorised and parents/carers will be informed in writing of the decision to refer the matter to the Local Authority initiating Penalty Notice protocols and possible prosecution.

If a pupil is absent for 20 days or more – for example due to an extended family holiday abroad – and in line with EWS protocols, the Academy reserves the right to remove the pupil from roll. Parents/carers must understand that the Academy could only re-admit their child if a place was available.