LOVE, LEARN, GROW

Seeking to flourish in the fullest way possible.

(John 10:10)

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Status	Stuatory
Responsible Person	John Shawcross / Sarah Wyatt / Jade Phillip
Review Date	Sep 2027
Responsible Governors' Committee	Full Governing Board
Ratified Date	Sep 2026

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

At St Matthew's (Little Lever) we provide an environment and curriculum that enables and encourages all members of our school family to flourish. Our Christian vision is that we Love, Learn and Grow together and that every child may flourish in the fullest way possible (John 10:10). Good attendance and punctuality are essential to fulfil this vision: children must be in school, safe and ready to learn, for every session of the school year.

Aims

This policy explains how we meet our statutory duties (including Working together to improve school attendance — DfE, July 2026) and sets out how the school will:

- Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality for all pupils.
- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education they are entitled to.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Build relationships with families so pupils receive the support they need to attend.

Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy reflects statutory guidance from the Department for Education: Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026) and Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2026, and is written with reference to relevant legislation including: Education Acts 1996, 2002, 2006; The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024; and the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations. The policy should be read alongside the school's Safeguarding/Child Protection policy, Behaviour policy, Online-safety policy and Volunteer policy.

R**oles and responsibilities**

4.1 Governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's vision and policies.
- Holding school leaders to account for attendance performance and statutory duties.
- Reviewing and challenging attendance data and ensuring staff receive appropriate training.

The link governor for attendance is Fr R Eloff.

4.2 Headteacher / Designated senior leader for attendance

The headteacher (Designated Senior Leader for attendance) is responsible for the implementation of this policy including:
Leading whole-school attendance practice and strategy.
Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting to governors.
Issuing penalty notices where appropriate (in line with LA policy).
Ensuring appropriate intervention and support for pupils and families.
Contact: 01204 333692 | office@stmll.bolton.sch.uk

4.3 Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads: Sarah Wyatt and Jade Phillips (Assistant Headteachers).

4.4 Attendance officers and operational staff

The attendance officers are responsible for daily operation: monitoring and analysing attendance data, overseeing daily registers, first-day contact, supporting reintegration plans, and advising the headteacher on legal intervention. The attendance officers are: John Shawcross (Headteacher), Kath Gallagher (Learning Mentor), Tracy Haslam (SBM), Alex Fulton and Adele Greenhalgh (Office Administrators). Contact via the school office.

4.5 Class teachers

Class teachers must record attendance accurately each session using the correct codes, notice and report patterns of absence, and support reintegration when children return.

4.6 Parents and carers

Parents/carers must ensure their child attends every day and on time, provide up-to-date contact details (minimum two emergency contacts), and notify the school of absence by 9:30am AND ideally by 8:45am on the first day.

4.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected, with support from parents, to attend school every day and arrive on time.

4.8 Safeguarding: staff reading KCSIE Part One

All staff, including those who do not usually work directly with children (supply staff, contractors, volunteers), must read Part One of Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2026 and confirm in writing that they have done so. Completion will be recorded on the single central record and staff training log.

4.9 Availability and cover for the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

During term time the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) — or a deputy — will always be available during school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. The DSL is Mr John Shawcross. Where the DSL is unavailable, the named Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are Mrs Sarah Wyatt and Mrs Jade Phillips (both Assistant Headteachers).

The school has robust cover arrangements to ensure safeguarding responsibilities are appropriately covered. **The DSL and learning mentor will receive a daily attendance report highlighting unauthorised absence and any children who are subject to child protection plans or those whose attendance is of concern.**

Recording attendance

5.1 Attendance register

We keep an attendance register and place all pupils on it. Registers are taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register indicates whether a pupil is: present, attending an approved off-site activity, absent or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

5.2 Electronic registers and retention

Registers are kept electronically (Bromcom). Registers are legal documents and will be retained for a minimum of six years. Any amendment to a register will record the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for amendment, the date of amendment and the name/role of the person who made the amendment.

5.3 Attendance codes

The school uses DfE attendance codes. Staff will be trained on correct coding and on the expectation to input codes as soon as the reason is known and no later than five working days after the session missed.

Absence reporting and first-day response

6.1 Reporting absence

Parents/carers must notify the school by telephone by 8:45 am on the day of absence (01204 333692) or as soon as practically possible. The school will record the reason and expected return date.

6.2 First-day contact & escalation timescale

If a pupil is absent without reason, the school will attempt first contact by telephone by 9:30 am on the first day of absence (or within two hours of the start of the school day where appropriate) to confirm the child's safety. If contact cannot be made, the school will follow escalation steps in Appendix 2 which may include additional telephone calls, a home visit and referral to Bolton's Early Intervention Team. Where a child is subject to a child protection plan, the school will notify Bolton's Early Intervention Team on the first day of unexplained absence.

6.3 Follow-up and escalation

Where absence continues, and no contact is established, the school will: make up to two further calls each day, consider a home visit, notify/seek advice from Bolton's Early Intervention Team where appropriate (this will be immediate for a child subject to a child protection plan), and follow procedures for children missing education where necessary.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

7.1 Authorised absence

Authorised absence will only be approved for valid reasons such as illness, medical/dental appointments (where unavoidable), religious observance, and other exceptional circumstances at the headteacher's discretion. Requests for planned absence should be submitted in writing as far in advance as possible.

7.2 Exceptional circumstances and leave of absence

The headteacher will only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Each request will be considered individually; evidence may be required, and parents will be notified of the decision in writing.

7.3 Unauthorised absence and legal sanctions

Where parents fail to ensure attendance, the local authority may issue penalty notices or commence prosecution in line with local protocols. Penalty notices are issued by the local authority, and may be issued by headteachers or police in line with local procedures. The school will follow Bolton LA guidance on penalty notices.

Lateness and punctuality

Registers open at 08:50 for the morning session (closed at 09:15). Children arriving before the register closes will be recorded as late (code L). Those arriving after the register has closed will be recorded as absent for that session (code U). Persistent lateness will be addressed with parents and may lead to escalation.

Monitoring, analysis and use of data

9.1 Internal monitoring

The school will monitor attendance daily, weekly and half-termly to identify pupils or cohorts (including pupils with SEND, pupils with a social worker, young carers, pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium, and those with EHCPs) who need additional support. Pupil-level absence data will be reviewed at least every three weeks for individuals.

9.2 Patterns and cohorts

We will use attendance data to identify and target support for pupils with persistent absence (missing 10% or more of sessions) and severe absence (missing 50% or more). The school will benchmark against national/local averages and share key data with governors.

9.3 Data for safeguarding

Attendance information which may indicate safeguarding risk (for example repeated failure to attend where a child is on a child protection plan) will be immediately flagged to the DSL, Learning Mentor and appropriate multi-agency partners.

Reducing persistent and severe absence — prevention and targeted support

10.1 Early help and Family Help

We will adopt a graduated approach to absence: early identification, family contact, tailored support, and referral to Bolton's Early Intervention Team or targeted Family Help where required. Interventions will be personalised and reviewed regularly.

10.2 Reintegration and part-time timetables

Any temporary part-time timetable will be used only in exceptional and short-term circumstances (e.g. medical need) with a clear written plan, regular review, and the aim of a return to full-time education. Remote education will only be used as a last resort and as part of a time-limited reintegration plan.

Equality, inclusion and reasonable adjustments

St Matthew's will apply this policy fairly while making reasonable adjustments for children with SEND, medical needs, young carers or other vulnerabilities. Attendance support plans and adjustments will be co-produced with parents and relevant professionals.

Volunteers, trips and one-off helpers

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 removed the supervision exemption from the regulated activity definition. Anyone who teaches, instructs, trains or supervises children on more than three days in a 30-day period, or overnight, is in regulated activity and must have an enhanced DBS with a barred-list check. The school will audit current volunteers, clubs and trip helpers, update volunteer induction, and obtain appropriate DBS checks where required. Occasional helpers not meeting the threshold will still be supervised and managed in line with school safeguarding procedures

Online safety, generative AI, filtering and monitoring

In line with KCSIE 2026 the school: conducts an annual filtering and monitoring effectiveness review, led by the SLT lead for IT and supported by the DSL; keeps a record of the review; and includes our position on generative AI in the Online-safety policy. The annual review will consider all internet-connected devices and locations.

Mobile phones

In line with KCSIE 2026 the school operates an effectively phone-free school day: lessons, time between lessons, break and lunch. Children should not use mobile phones during the school day. Phones brought for travel safety must be handed into the office on arrival and collected at home time. Details of storage and enforcement are set out in the Behaviour and Mobile Phone policies.

Safeguarding and attendance

Attendance and safeguarding are closely linked. The DSL will receive daily reports of unauthorised absence, and specific safeguarding-related attendance concerns (for example, children subject to child protection plans who do not attend) will be escalated immediately. The school's Safeguarding/Child Protection policy explains processes for referral to social care and multi-agency working.

Communication with parents and publication

This policy will be published on the school website. Parents will be informed of key changes at least once each academic year and whenever significant changes occur. The school provides half-termly attendance feedback to families and a full annual attendance report.

Data protection

Attendance data will be processed in line with data protection laws. Records are kept securely, access is limited to authorised staff and information is shared with outside agencies only where necessary for safeguarding or statutory duties.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and in response to changes in statutory guidance. The next scheduled review is September 2027.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil 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 pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil 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 pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

96%-100%

- If your child's attendance is over 96% - Well done! School will continue monitor attendnce and offer rewards for continued good attendance.

94% - 96%

- If your child's attendance falls below 96% we will monitor this carefully and may ask you to come in to school to disucss ways we can support you and your family.

90% - 93%

- If your child's attendnce falls below 93% we will write to you to explain the next steps we will take in supporting you to imrpove your child's attendance.

No improvement / Below 90%

- If your child's attendance does not imrpove or falls below 90% we will invite you into school to disucss this with the Headteacher and Learning Mentor. If your child is absent from school we will call you twice each day to check in and offer support.

Further Decline

- If attednande continues to be an issue we may apply for a oenalty notice to be issued . If 10 unauthorised absences this will be issued at any time.

St Matthew's (Little Lever)
Pupil Leave of Absence Request Form – Medical Appointment

Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year. Full attendance is vital for your child's educational progress. The Local Authority expects all parents and guardians to ensure that their children attend school whenever possible. Absences due to holidays taken during school time could hinder their academic attainment and are therefore classed as unauthorised in line with the Local Authority guidelines.

If you wish to apply for your child to be absent from school for a medical appointment, please complete this form and return it to school as soon as possible with a copy of your child's appointment card/letter.

PARENTS' SECTION

Child's Name: _____ Class: _____

Reason for Absence:

_____

_____

_____

Date of Appointment:_____ Time of Appointment: _____

Time to be collected from school: _____ am/pm

What time will your child return to school (if applicable): _____ am/pm

Will a school dinner be required on the day of the appointment? _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

St. Matthew's (Little Lever)
Pupil Leave of Absence Request Form

With effect from September 2024 school is no longer allowed to authorise absences during term time for family holidays. Headteachers can only grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Parents who chose to take children out of school for 10 sessions of more for holidays or any other reason which is unauthorised may be issued with a fixed penalty notice. Fixed Penalty notices are issued to each adult at the pupil's address.

PLEASE NOTE THAT CHANGES TO PENALTY NOTICES COME INTO EFFECT FROM AUGUST. DETAILS CAN BE FOUND ON THE SCHOOL WEBSITE.

Unlike many schools we have two weeks off at the half term in summer (May/June). Please make every effort to ensure any family holidays are planned for school holidays.

Name of Child _____ Class _____

Reason for Application _____

_____

_____

_____

Total number of school days requested _____

First date of requested absence _____ End date of absence _____

Parent/Carer signature _____ Date _____

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

Headteacher to complete

No of days approved _____ No of days refused _____

Headteachers signature _____

Date _____

Office to compete

Date letter sent to parents _____

Actual date of return to school _____

Date fixed penalty notice issued _____

Date taken off roll _____

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St Matthew's CE Primary