

School Attendance and Punctuality Policy

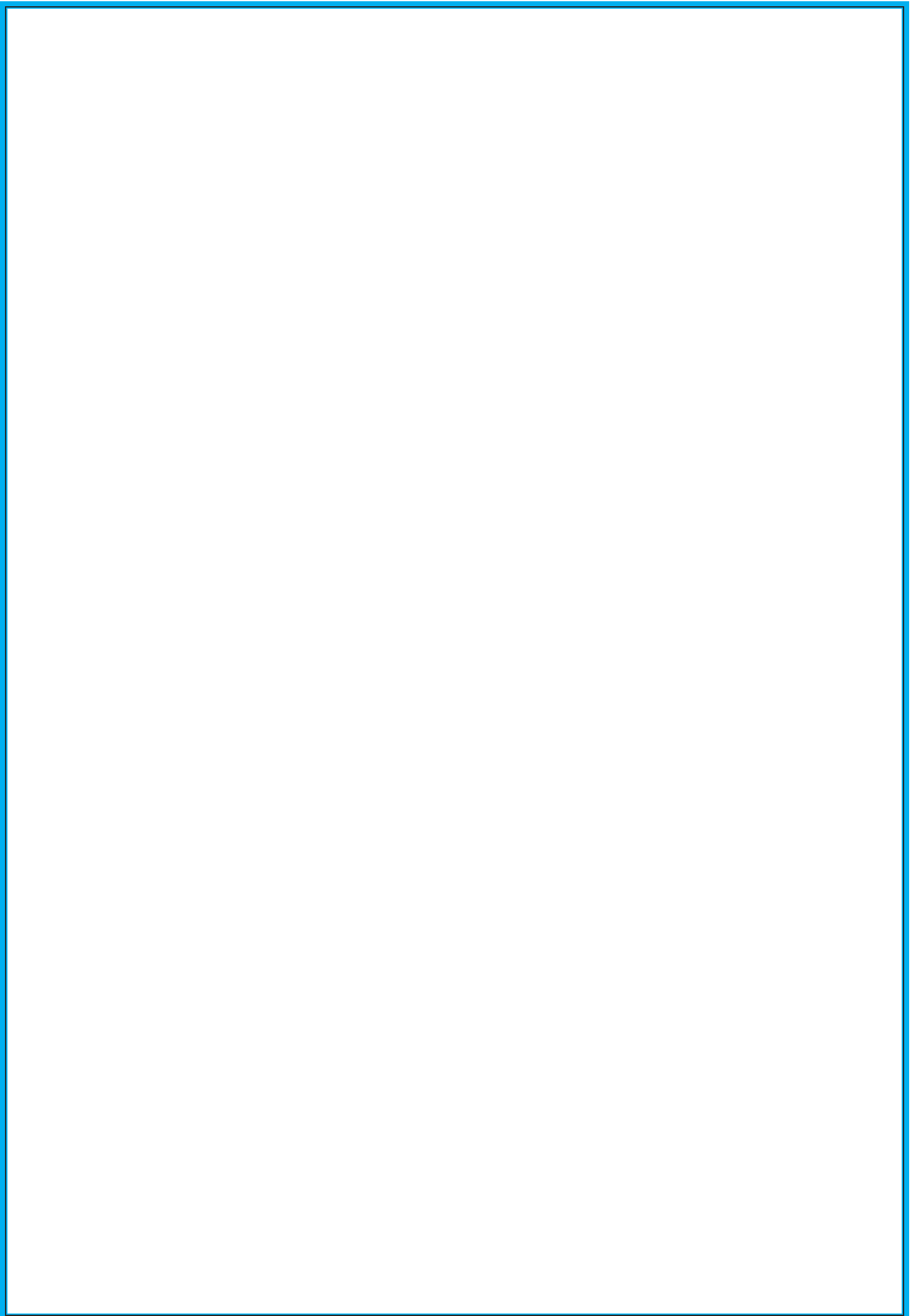


Through respect we will work together in Christ to develop the whole person

October 2021

Date of Review: October 2022

Attendance Leader: Lynn Evans



1.0 Introduction

St Matthew's Catholic Primary School recognises the clear link between the attendance and achievement of pupils. The aim of this policy, is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality for pupils within St Matthew's Catholic Primary School to support learning and development.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding issues. It is important to see our children every day and provide an educationally safe and secure environment.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that all pupils attend regularly and on time. Pupils should aim to attend every day that the school is open. We set a target for all pupils to aim for 100% attendance with the expectation all pupils achieve at least 97%. ***As a school we define regular attendance as 97% or above.***

St Matthew's Catholic Primary School believes Teachers, Parents, Carers, Pupils and all members of the school community have an important contribution in improving attendance and punctuality ensuring pupils attend to achieve. This Policy sets out how we will achieve this together and should be read in conjunction with the Attendance Roles and Responsibilities Guidance attached to this document.

2.0 Aims

- Maximise the overall percentage of pupil attendance and punctuality at St Matthew's Catholic Primary School.
- Reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent and raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community.
- Provide support advice and guidance for parents, pupils and staff.
- Develop clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for pupils.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data.
- Ensure a whole school approach to ensure consistency of intervention strategies.
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children's Services, Health and other partner agencies.

2.1 Promoting regular Attendance at St. Matthew's Catholic Primary School:

This is everyone's responsibility, all members of staff, parent/carers and pupils. To help us all focus on this, St Matthew's Catholic Primary School will ensure:

- Appropriate interventions are in place to improve punctuality.
- An appropriate curriculum is provided and will be reviewed regularly.
- The need for high quality teaching and learning throughout the school is recognised as being essential to the promotion of attendance.
- Pupils are provided with appropriate support to minimise absence from school. This includes St Matthew's Catholic Primary School and multi-agency provision as appropriate.
- Special Educational Needs, disadvantaged and Looked After pupils and other vulnerable groups are given appropriate support, and attendance is monitored rigorously.
- Effective partnerships with parent/carers are encouraged through regular contact and support provided.
- Parents/carers are kept informed of pupils' attendance and punctuality through first day contact, termly progress reports, individual letters and meetings when required.
- Good attendance and punctuality are rewarded through regular incentives.
- Attendance and punctuality are regularly discussed with pupils in class and at assemblies.
- Staff attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff should ensure these are followed.

3.0 Attendance Expectations and Absence Procedures

A child not attending school is considered to be a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is required.

3.1 Expectations of Parent/Carer

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

- Ensure your child arrives for school on time.
- Telephone school if your child is to be late.
- For routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments please ensure they are made outside of school hours.
- Contact school preferably by **9.15** am on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend through illness, giving an indication of the expected duration and return date to school.
- If a text message/phone call is received as a result of your child's absence it is important that you respond to this text to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- Contact the School Office and request to speak to a member of staff privately if the reason for absence requires a more personal contact.
- **In case of emergency** we need up to date contact numbers at all times so please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers. (As a school we request a minimum of two emergency contact details be provided)
- **Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing to the Headteacher and can only be authorised by the Headteacher. Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school, include general holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts and birthdays.**

3.2 If a pupil is absent we will

- Telephone and text the parent/carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by **9.45** am.
- If no response is received and the absence is unauthorised a member of school staff will conduct a home visit as directed by head teacher. If there are safeguarding concerns contact will be made with the family as soon as possible.
- If a pupil's absences are increasing and we are not aware of a good reason the parent/carer will be invited to meet the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or Pastoral Care Lead.
- If absences persist the attendance team will discuss actions with the Education Welfare Officer.

4.0 Understanding types of Absence

St Matthew's Catholic Primary School has to record every absence that a pupil takes from school and this is why it is important that parents/carers advise school about the cause of any absence, preferably by calling the school on the first day of absence and in writing on the pupil's return.

4.1 Authorised Absence

Authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. **If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.** It is the Headteacher, not parents who make the decision to authorise absence from school.

4.2 Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not

approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes but is not exclusive to:

- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
- Absences which have not been explained.
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get their mark.

This type of absence may lead to the use of Penalty Notices or other sanctions from the Local Authority. From September 2018 St Matthew's Catholic Primary School can issue warning letters (in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct) to parents where their child has accrued **10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any one term**. The warning period will cover a period of 20 schools' days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time the school will refer to case to the local authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued.

4.3 Persistent Absence

- Pupils are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DFE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. **The DFE expects schools to intervene well before pupils reach a level of persistent absence.**
- Whilst we understand that pupils can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. If a pupil is reluctant to attend or a parent/carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school as soon as possible to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution.
- Parent/Carers are asked to contact the School Office in the first instance.

5.0 Why Regular Attendance is very important:

Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect pupils' learning. Pupils who have time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

- 90% attendance is equivalent to a pupil missing one half day per week or approximately 118 lessons per year

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

6.0 The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

- The Education Welfare Officer (Ms A. Griffiths)– provides support for parents/carer and advice on problems relating to attendance, and encourages good communications between home and school.
- The EWO will always try to resolve the situation by agreement with the family but, if a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists the EWO will be required to consider the instigation of legal proceedings which include; Penalty Notices, Parental Prosecution and Education Supervision Orders. Details regarding attendance law, penalty fines and legal interventions are available from the Local Authority.

7.0 Leave of absence in Term Time

The Law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in truly exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Parents/carers can receive a Penalty Notice for taking their child on holiday during term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

8.0 Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day they can miss work and late arriving pupils disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the pupil arriving late and can encourage future absence.

8.1 How we manage lateness

The school day starts and registers are taken at 8.55am by the class teacher and pupils receive a late mark if they are not in their class by 9.00am. School recommends that pupils arrive for 8.45am.

- If a pupil arrives late to school parents/carers will receive a text message/telephone call to inform them of their child's late arrival.
- Late arrival to school following the close of registers is classified as an absence. If a pupil is persistently late after the official close of the register, the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice.

If a Parent/Carer has any problem getting their child to attend school on time they should contact the School Office who will offer support to resolve the problem.

9.0 People Responsible for Attendance Matters at St Matthew's Catholic Primary School

All school staff, parents/carers and pupils need to work as a team to support the attendance and achievement of pupils. This continued support therefore is vital in making every pupil's journey through school a success.

10.0 Removal from Roll

From the 1st September 2016 changes were introduced to the Pupil Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

As a school we are now required to:

- Inform the LA in **every** circumstance when deleting a pupil's name from the admission register
- Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school.
- Provide information to the LA when registering new pupils, including the pupil's address and previous school.

If your child is leaving our school parents are asked to:

- Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.
- If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Appendices

Attendance and Punctuality Roles and Responsibilities Guidance

Whole School Approach

When	Whom	Actions Expected
DAILY	Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive on school site by 8.45 am • Be in class on time for registration at 8.55 am
	Class Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registers are completed on ParentPay each day on time • Ensure attendance has a high profile in class • Discuss absence with pupils returning to school • Welcoming long-term absentees back into the class
	Pastoral Staff/ office staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring staff have completed AM/PM registers • Ensuring input of accurate attendance marks in the register via SIMS • Identify pupils who are absent from school without reason (before 9.45am) • Log on SIMS, parental voicemails, text messages and emails regarding student absences • Ensure all Late arriving pupils are spoken to and their attendance is entered on to SIMS • SIMS in touch messages sent to parent/carers who have failed to contact regarding their child's absence and also pupils who arrive late. • First day absence phone contact with parents/carers, following up unexplained absences where no text message/phone call has been returned. • SLT and class teachers contacted with specific attendance queries and necessary follow ups required • Supporting staff with registration queries, support the interventions of the class teachers. • Logging attendance of all pupils going out /in school for medical, dental or visits • Daily liaison with other settings for pupils educated off site to ensure AM and PM registers are provided within set time parameters and pupils who fail to attend with reasons unknown are followed up through the First Day contact systems. • Daily Late process, log and send actions for relevant staff. • Daily Attendance/ PA report sent to senior leader with responsibility for attendance.
	EWO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding home visits as required. • Focused casework interventions with persistent absence pupils and families. • Phone call contact with pupils/parent/carers • Home visits • Instigation of legal proceedings • Tracking of actions and interventions and feedback to pastoral staff.
	Senior Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and tracking of staff not completing registers in line with • Safeguarding requirements. • Liaison with EWO, Pastoral staff and class teachers regarding support work with identified pupils

When	Whom	Actions Expected
WEEKLY	Class teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all members of the class know the school target and their current attendance
	Pastoral Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor/follow up identified pupil absence by contacting parent/carers where appropriate. • Informing SLT and EWO of pupil patterns of absence. • Provide weekly pupil attendance figures for class teachers and pupil rewards • Discuss punctuality issues with identified pupils and parent/carers • Pupils rewards
	Senior Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and Tracking of staff not completing registers in line with • Safeguarding requirements. • Liaison with EWO, Pastoral Coordinators and SLT regarding support work with identified pupils

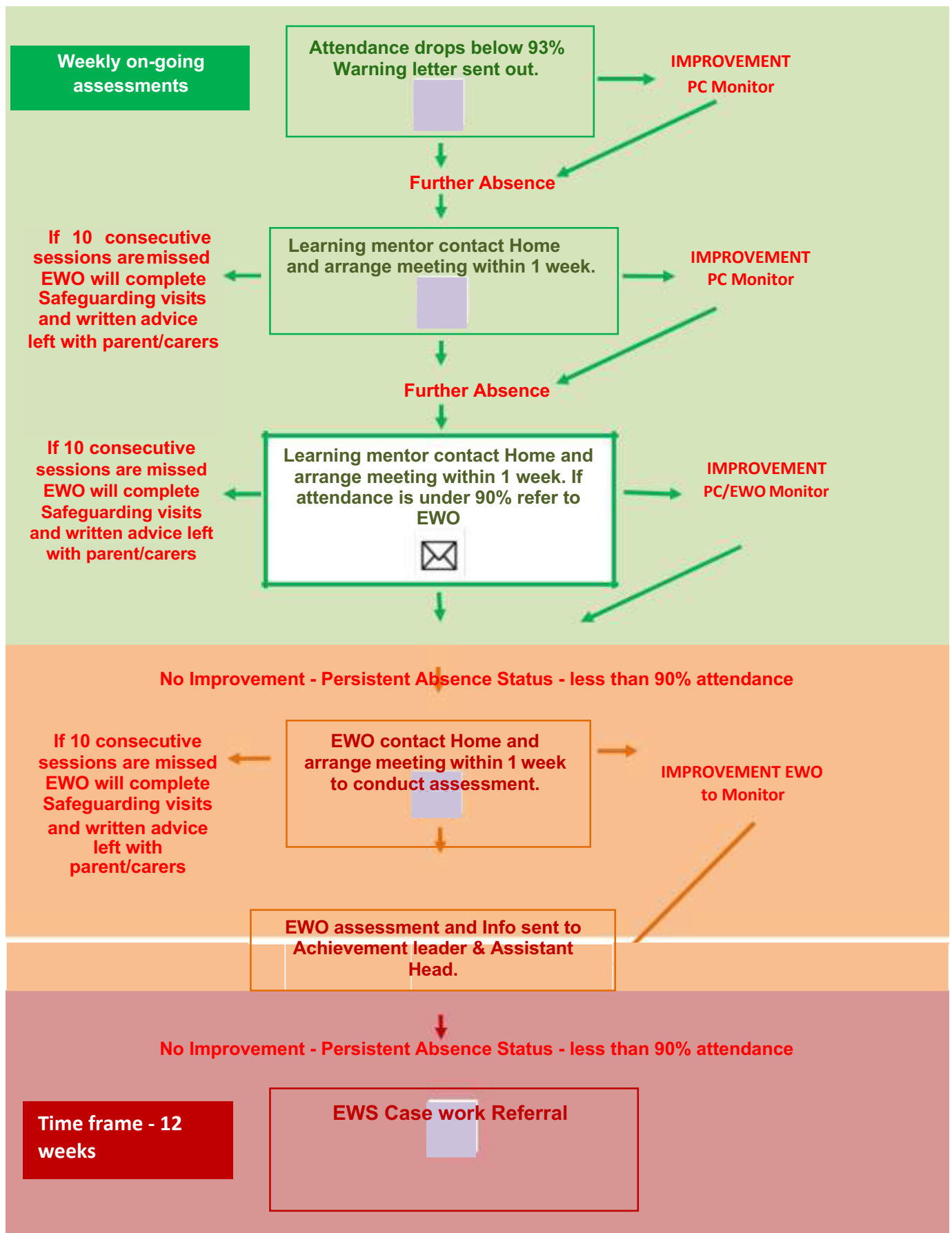
When	Whom	Actions Expected
HALF TERMLY	Senior Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a high profile of attendance as a significant contributor to pupil achievement • Use attendance data to identify and take action to improve the attendance of vulnerable pupils • Ensure that all teaching staff focus on attendance in planning and pedagogy
	Senior Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that attendance features in ALL parents' evenings • Monitor and track attendance/PA Action Plans • Liaise with EWO to share information and agree joint actions re action plans or other pupils causing concern

TERMLY	Senior Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of attendance is underpinned by awareness of safeguarding issues for all pupils both in school and those at off-site provision • School Attendance Review alongside the EWO • Ensure that attendance is given a high profile as a key driver of school improvement and provide support and guidance to SLT, for plans to raise attendance • Ensure that the attendance policy is implemented across the school and that systems are operating effectively. • Report to SLT on attendance matters • Ensure school prospectus, parent/carers welcome booklet and school newsletters promote Attendance
	Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that attendance maintains a high profile as a key driver of school improvement through close monitoring and scrutiny of attendance data in conjunction with SLT and Governors

9.0 Table of Escalation of Interventions

Attendance %	RAG	Intervention	Lead Responsibility
100% Attendance is Excellent		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rewards and Praise 	Class Teacher Office/Attendance Team Pastoral Staff Senior Leader Team
99% - 97% Attendance is Good		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rewards and Encouragement 	Class Teacher Pastoral Staff Senior Leader Team
96% - 90% Attendance is a Concern		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to pupils & contact parent/carers 5-minute meetings Return to school discussions Including class teacher Safe and well safeguarding visits Early intervention EWO/Learning Mentor Persistent absence warning letters/Visits/interventions/support 	Class Teacher Pastoral Staff Senior Leader EWO
Below 90% Attendance is a Serious Concern		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular next action planning meetings Safe and well safeguarding visits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Plans Legal intervention 	Senior Leader Pastoral staff Attendance Team Office Staff Governors EWO

EXAMPLE School Improving Student Attendance – flow chart



Addendum- Covid-19

From the schools Covid-19 Operational Guidance for Schools (Updated September 2021)

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age and it is a priority to ensure that as many children as possible regularly attend school.

Where a child is required to self-isolate or quarantine because of COVID-19 in accordance with relevant legislation or guidance published by PHE or the DHSC they should be recorded as code X (not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus). Where they are unable to attend because they have a confirmed case of COVID-19 they should be recorded as code I (illness).

For pupils abroad who are facing challenges to return, code X is unlikely to apply. In some specific cases, code Y (unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances) will apply. Further guidance about the use of codes is provided in the [school attendance guidance](#).

Punctuality

St Matthew's continues to operate staggered start and finish times to keep 'bubbles' apart as they arrive and leave school. Staggered start and finish times will not reduce the amount of overall teaching time each child receives. Please ensure your child arrives on time and is collected on time in order to minimise disruption in line with the school's Covid risk management. Please contact the school ahead if you are experiencing difficulties. If lateness persists, the school will want to discuss this with you and agree some support measures; if matters do not improve, the lateness will **not be authorised** and the matter may be referred to the local authority Education Welfare Service.

Please refer to our 'drop off and collection' arrangements and **be aware that the gathering of parents at the school gates and otherwise coming onto the site without an appointment is not allowed.**

Absence Procedures

- **Parents and carers should notify the school as normal** if your child is unable to attend on any given day. You must update the school regularly regarding any ongoing absence.
- Where a child is not regularly attending school, we will discuss this with you to understand what the difficulties are and agree some supportive measures to improve matters as early as possible. Normal absence procedures will be followed (please refer to our main Attendance Policy found above)
- Where the school's efforts do not result in an improvement in attendance or punctuality, and if there is no valid reason for the child to be absent, we will refer to the local authority Education Welfare Service for additional support, advice and statutory intervention.

Procedures for COVID related absence.

If a parent reports a pupil absence due to COVID symptoms they should stay at home, be advised to get a test immediately and engage with NHS test and trace process. Tests can be booked online through the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus website or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet.

- **Code X** to be applied during the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known.
- **Parents must inform school immediately of the results of a test:**
- If a pupil tests negative, they should return to school the following day if they are well.

- If the child tests positive they should follow the 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection' and must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. (This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone) The 10-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal.
- If a pupil tests positive but has no symptoms for COVID-19 they must self-isolate for 10 days, starting from the day the test was taken.

Referrals to the Education Welfare Service

- All unauthorised absence is reported to the Education Welfare Service so the local authority can offer additional advice and support to parents as necessary. Where unauthorised absence is persistent, sanctions may be imposed to include warnings, penalty notices, prosecution in the magistrate's court or an education supervision order through the family proceedings court.
- Where a child or family is away from home including abroad, and unable to return home, parents are expected to provide the school with detailed information as to the whereabouts, reasons for travel and estimated return dates. Where the school is not satisfied with the reasons provided, the absence will not be authorised, and this could result in the local authority issuing a Penalty Notice (please refer to our main Attendance Policy)
- Leave of absence can only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**, at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body. **Holidays in term time are not viewed as exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to time off during term time.**
- Where the school and the Education Welfare Service have failed to locate the child/family within 20 school days, the child will be referred to the **Local authority Children Missing Education Pupil Tracking Officer** (CME officer) who will undertake additional checks with other agencies to locate them, including consultation with social care, the police, health and housing. Where these enquiries do not lead to confirmation of the child's whereabouts, the matter will remain open to that service who will widen their enquiries. In these circumstances, the school cannot guarantee to keep a school place open for your child.

Safeguarding

If at any time the school are concerned for a child's safety or welfare from any year group, we will consult with the relevant agencies and follow the local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.