

ST. BERNADETTE'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY 2021-2022

“At St. Bernadette’s Catholic School you will find us caring, hardworking and co-operative. We follow the ways of Jesus using our talents and gifts to make our school special. We show respect to all and welcome you.”

STATEMENT

At St. Bernadette’s Catholic School, we aim to ensure that all children attend school regularly and on time to enable them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available. As regular, punctual attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents. All staff recognise that there is a collective responsibility for action on school attendance. Attendance data for class and year groups is shared, with staff and they have access to individual children’s attendance through the SIMs system.

AIMS

- To improve the overall attendance of children at school
- To improve children’s attainment through good attendance
- To encourage parents to ensure that their children arrive on time
- To make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school, including parents, pupils, teachers and governors.

TARGET

The school aim is to have a pupil attendance figure of a minimum of 96%.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.
- Regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with.
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular attenders have an easier transfer to secondary school

Legislative Framework

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 (sec 444) to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the education authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area.

School attendance, Safeguarding and Children Missing Education

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and such children are at risk of being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation. School and college staff should follow their procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. It is essential that all staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016)

All Schools are required to make the local authority aware of every registered pupil who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 5 school days Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulation 12.

St. Bernadette's Catholic School undertakes its responsibilities to comply with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2016 in relation to the removal of pupils from school role and follows the Children Missing Education Advice issued by the DFE

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

This attendance policy is part of broader suite of Safeguarding policies. The School Attendance lead will liaise with the schools Designated Safeguarding Lead regarding potential safeguarding concern.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Who is responsible for attendance issues in school?

- St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School has a named Attendance Officer (Mrs Shalvey) with responsibility for attendance issues.
- Members of school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have responsibility for attendance issues in school. See appendix 1 for a detailed breakdown of these roles and responsibilities.
- Attendance matters are reviewed by the Head Teacher and members of the senior management team.
- Attendance issues are reported at least termly to the Governing body.
- St. Bernadette's School uses an Educational Welfare Officer to support the school with the processes associated with children's attendance at school and to liaise with the Local Authority. School contracts the Educational Welfare Officer to provide the legal monitoring services and support that will help reduce the number of persistent absent pupils and improve whole school attendance. We believe that through attending school every day on time children and young people will get the best possible start in life.

As a parent you can help us by:

- Ringing before 9.00am on the first morning of all absences with the reason and saying when the child will return. Parents are expected to maintain contact with the school throughout the absence.
- Arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks.
- Sending in a note explaining the reason for absence on your child's return to school after an illness including any evidence where appropriate.
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness.
- Making sure your child leaves for school with plenty of time to arrive on time.
- Supporting and encouraging your child by attending parents' evenings and other events.
- Contacting the school to discuss any concerns regarding your child's attendance.
- Working in partnership with the school to resolve any issues that are impacting on your child's attendance.
- Not taking children out of school for holidays in term time or for other unnecessary absences.

We shall:

- Check the school registers for any absences where there has been no contact by parents or a reason given.
- Follow up unexplained absences by text message/ phone calls as soon as possible. We will try to call you on the first morning of your child's absence.
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in newsletters, the school prospectus, and the Home-school agreement.
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance e.g. through certificates, non-uniform days, cinema trips for the best attending class and attendance prize draws for children with 98%+ attendance each term.
- Publish your child's attendance rate on his/her annual school report.
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance by asking you to attend a pre-legal attendance meeting.
- Carry out home visits with the Educational Welfare Officer and a school representative.

PROCEDURES

Registers-

An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial both to provide a solid foundation for analysis of absence and to support any statutory interventions.

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately.

Attendance registers will be kept in accordance with legal requirements, local authority guidelines and school regulations

Every half a day of absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as 'authorised absences'. For example, if a child is ill, family bereavement, religious observance.

Authorised absence is where the Head Teacher has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence

We realise that there are rare occasions when there might be a particular problem that caused your child to be absent. Please let us know as we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

Unauthorised Absence

All other absences, including persistent lateness, must be treated as unauthorised.

Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Lateness after the register closes at 8.55am
- Waiting on a delivery
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Your child's birthday
- Unapproved holidays
- Keeping children off because other members of the family are ill.
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory.

Unauthorised absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. Who may consider taking legal action against you if your child has unauthorised absences. This may result in a fixed penalty notice or court proceedings.

Absence can only be authorised by a person designated to do so by the Head Teacher. [see The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (SI No. 2006/1751) – reg 7(1)].

St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School complies with and uses the DFE compulsory national attendance codes to categorise absence.

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	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	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

The class teacher registers the pupils using SIMS. The register is called in class, and then sent electronically through to the admin machine in the office. The teacher marks a student present (Code / as per DFE compulsory attendance codes) or absent (code N as per DFE compulsory attendance codes). Those students arriving late (between 8.45am and 8.55am), are then marked in as late L on the administration machine by the Attendance Officer / secretary. Children arriving after 8.55am are classed as having an unauthorised absence (Code U as per DFE compulsory attendance codes).

An Absence Report is produced weekly, which details all previous absence for each student for which no reason has been provided. The Attendance Officer selects the appropriate code and mark the Absence Report accordingly.

Absence Procedures

Procedure for Reporting an Absence

1. First day phone call on day of absence – preferably before 9.00am or speak to Attendance officer/ Secretary

If no phone call has been received



2. Parents will receive a text or phone call.

If no response



3. The child will receive an unauthorised absence.

Illness and other legitimate reasons.

If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the school on the first day and every day of absence before 9:00 am where possible.

Parents may also send a letter to school when their child returns, explaining the absence. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure.

Please note that where your child has suffered from a bout of vomiting or diarrhoea your child will need to remain off school for 48 hours from when the last bout occurred.

It is a school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In exceptional circumstances further evidence of a child's illness may be requested.

However, schools can challenge parents' statements or medical evidence and seek additional evidence by liaising with G.Ps, hospitals and other external agencies if they have any concerns regarding a child's attendance.

In fact it is good practice to have clear systems in place to escalate any concerns about high levels of absence due to illness, including agreements about accessing additional services in order to provide appropriate support to pupils, particularly for long term illness

The types of scenarios when medical evidence may be requested include:

- Attendance is less than 94%
- There are frequent odd day absences due to reported illness
- The same reasons for absence are frequently repeated
- Where there is a particular medical problems and school may need evidence to seek additional support/provide support

Requests for leave of absence (exceptional circumstances)

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 have amended Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Procedure for requesting a planned absence

- All leave of absence requests will be unauthorised unless the circumstances are exceptional. A parent/carer should complete an absence request form and submit this to the school at least two weeks prior to the date required. School will respond to the request within two weeks. If school is aware of any language difficulties that may preclude a request form being completed appropriate support will be offered to the parent/carer.
- DFE guidelines make clear that leave of absence during term-time should be regarded as exceptional. If a parent/carer considers they require their child to have a leave of absences for exceptional circumstances they should complete the absence request form which can be obtained from the school office. There is a requirement that parent/carers provide evidence of the exceptional circumstance and may be required to meet with the Head Teacher.
- If the Head Teacher deems that the reasons for the request are exceptional and authorises the absence, a letter confirming that the request has been authorised will be sent to the parent/carer
- If the Head Teacher deems that the reasons are not exceptional then the leave of absence will not be authorised; a letter informing the parents of this decision for each child and warning of the legal implications of the absence being taken will be sent to each parent.
- If once notified in writing of the decision to unauthorise the leave of absence, the absence is taken it will be marked as an unauthorised absence on the pupils register.

Holidays

All holiday leave in term time is not permitted unless in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Head Teacher. In addition, the Head Teacher is the person who determines the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Truancy

If truancy is suspected, the Head Teacher is notified, who then contacts the parent. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved.

Poor attendance and Persistent Absentees

Those children whose attendance falls below national average will be closely monitored and further action considered. At St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School we will challenge the attitude of those pupils and parents who give a low priority to attendance. All registers will be checked and absences monitored on a regular basis.

We will analyse individual pupil data to identify quickly patterns of absence which cause concern and parents will be informed by the school where their child's attendance causes concern.

Pupils whose attendance is less than 90% are referred to as persistent absentees by the DFE. There is an expectation that when a pupil's attendance falls below 90% then an action plan will be put in place by the school and parents to address the underlying reasons and to improve attendance.

After school has attempted to address attendance issues with parents, and if there is no improvement the Attendance and Welfare Officer will be informed where the child's attendance remains a concern.

Escalating Procedure for Tackling Poor attendance and persistent absence

94% to 100% attendance: no evidence required. (Phone call or letter is sufficient).

- Below 94%, medical evidence maybe required.

Pupils with less than 94% are identified by the School attendance officer half termly



School attendance officer will contact parents to discuss ways to improve attendance and put strategies in place.



No Improvement Standard letter sent to parents inviting them to attend a pre-legal meeting with the Educational Welfare Officer.



No Improvement - If there are more than 20 unauthorised absences, a spotlight campaign.

Parents of pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern may be invited to attend a pre-legal meeting. This is a formal meeting to discuss the child's school attendance, identify any barriers to regular school attendance and agree a target and action plan to improve school attendance.

The pre-legal meeting is chaired by the Educational Welfare Officer. School representatives will be present and this may include anyone in school who is involved with your child for an example a learning mentor.

If parents still refuse to send their child to school they may be placed on a 'Spotlight' programme and can be prosecuted or may be liable to pay a fixed penalty notice. Fines are set at £120 per parent, per child, per offence. This will be reduced to £60 if the fine is paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid by the end of a 28 day period parents will be taken to court under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Furthermore, parents who receive fines are now also liable to cover any court fees and costs.

Punctuality

It is important to be on time for school as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to hear readers or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day. Children must attend on time to be given a present mark for the session. If your child misses this short but vital session, their learning may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child. Arrival after the close of registration may be marked as unauthorised absence in line with the DfE guidance.

Morning registration is at 8.45am. This is the time your child must be in class. Lateness is classed as any child coming into school between 8.45am and 8.55am. All children arriving after 8.45am must enter through the KS2 doors and after 8.55am report to the office. Lateness after 8.55am is classed as an unauthorised absence (code U as per DfE compulsory attendance codes).

Lateness is continually monitored. Where children have persistent lateness the Attendance Officer will invite the parents into school for a formal meeting. Should the lateness persist thereafter, further action may be taken which may result in the issue of a penalty notice. Fines are set at £120 per parent, per child, per offence. This will be reduced to £60 if the fine is paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid by the end of a 28 day period parents will be taken to court under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

We will let you know if there are concerns about your child's punctuality.

Lateness has an impact on a child's social and academic development.

5 minutes late = 3 days lost

10 minutes late = 6.5 days lost

15 minutes late – 10 days lost.

It is also important to ensure that you are punctual collecting your child at the end of the school day as this can often cause distress and upset. Fines may be given for any child that is late being collected after 3.10pm to cover costs of looking after that child.

Good and excellent attendance.

The school will reward good and improved attendance regularly through reward schemes and incentives.

As part of a whole school initiative, individual teachers are encouraged to promote good attendance and punctuality within their own class. Any concerns are raised with the Attendance Officer.

Weekly attendance

Weekly attendance figures are displayed and discussed in assembly. The class with the best attendance in the year band is rewarded with a silver star (1 point). The class with the best attendance in the Key Stage receives a gold star (2 points); individual pupils are praised for improved attendance with a sticker or a golden certificate as appropriate. Attendance is mentioned regularly in assemblies and newsletters.

Termly attendance

The aggregate attendance figures are recorded and the class within school with the best attendance record for the term is rewarded with a cinema trip.

Pupils with 100% attendance for a term will receive a certificate and can wear their own clothes.

Pupils with 98% or above for a term, will be entered into a raffle and 3 will receive a gift voucher.

Please note: in order to receive 100% a child must have been in school for **all** morning and afternoon registrations. Absence for religious observance or for medical appointments are deemed to be an authorised absence and therefore children will not be deemed as having 100%.

Data Analysis

All schools must provide their attendance data to the DFE, most schools use their management information systems to send their data via school census. The figures returned are then published by the DFE as part of the annual publication of school statistics.

St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School will use data effectively to identify particular groups of children whose absences cause concern.

We will use data to track the attendance of individual pupils.

Where attendance is a concern we will use data to analyse attendance by year group, classes, groups of pupils for example ethnicity or gender to help illuminate areas of concern.

We will use data to identify the main causes of absences within the school and take action to address and improve those areas.

We collect, use and store attendance information about our pupils and may receive information about you from your previous school. The information we keep regarding attendance includes name, contact details, attendance records, late records and any relevant medical information.

Where there is cause for concern this information is shared with the Educational Welfare Officer during regular attendance meetings held at our school. The Educational Welfare Officer then follows up attendance concerns with parents and carers on our behalf.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

Attendance is regularly reviewed by senior management, although all staff are able to contribute to improving and maintaining pupil attendance and to take ownership of attendance is a whole school responsibility.

The following will be communicated to Governors:

- the previous year's total attendance for the whole school
- the previous year's total attendance for the whole school (minus Nursery)
- the number of pupils taken off roll as a result of factors related to behaviour, safety and attendance
- overall persistent absence
- vulnerable groups (FSM/PP/SEN)
- punctuality over time

Communication to Parents.

This policy is shared on the school's website and parents are directed annually to its existence.

Where parents apply for leave which is refused they will be informed in writing prior to departure of the procedure if a child does not return to school by the return date.

Parents annually will receive 'Leave in Term Time – A very important message for all parents' letter. This is distributed to all parents in September each academic year.

During Autumn and Spring term parents' evenings, the Attendance Officer will be available to discuss attendance procedures which will be available for all parents. Specific parents will be targeted at this time to meet the Attendance Officer.

Policy Reviewed: July 2021

Appendix 1

St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School Roles and Responsibilities for school attendance

Role	Responsibilities
Schools Governors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure compliance with relevant legislation (e.g. pupil registration, attendance registers) • Setting Attendance targets • Reviewing school attendance • Agreeing and Reviewing School Policy
Head Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with relevant legislation • Putting into practice school policy • Authorising/ unauthorising absences • Leave of absence request • Line management
Senior Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with relevant legislation • Putting into practice school policy • Line management • Promoting school attendance
Attendance lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairing attendance panels • Compliance with relevant legislation • Putting into practice school policy • Contact with parents: • Overview of clear and escalating interventions • Recording and evaluation of interventions • Data analysis • Responsibility for links with Education Enforcement Team • Promoting school attendance • Management of reward scheme • Pupil Profiles • Planning attendance panels • First day calling • Late arrivals • Attendance targeting • Day to day responsibility for escalating approach
Class teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marking registers • Promoting importance of regular schools attendance • Providing early warning of attendance concerns • Positive role modelling • Following policy and procedures
School Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining registers • First day calling in absence of attendance lead • Late arrivals • Process for clearing registers

Appendix 2

SCHOOL ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

Form to be returned to the school office with a minimum of two weeks' notice

Please note that there is no automatic right for pupils to be granted authorised leave of absence and requests will only be considered where there are exceptional circumstances.

Name of Pupil	Class
Date of birth	
Please detail below the exceptional circumstance why you are requesting to take your child out of school. You may be invited into school to discuss your request with the Head Teacher (please attach your supporting evidence)	
.....	
.....	
.....	
.....	
Address.....	
.....	
.....	
Leave of absence from date:..... to date	
Number of schools days that your child will be absent from school	
Signature	Date
Name of Parent/Carer	

Leave of absence which has not been agreed will be marked as unauthorised. These may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer for consideration which could result in a Penalty Notice.

For School Use:

Previous requests for leave of absence Yes / No Attendance %

Evidence provided for exceptional circumstance Yes / No

Arrange to meet with Parent/Carer Yes / No Date & time

Authorised

Unauthorised

By Head Teacher

APPENDIX 3

Example: General Letter to all Parents about Punctuality

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: Punctuality

I am writing to remind you of St. Bernadette's School's policy about lateness.

The law requires pupils to attend school regularly and this includes arriving on time each day.

When a pupil arrives late to school, there are many consequences:

- He or she misses out on reading time or essential instructions given at the beginning of lessons – in fact, arriving 5 minutes late each day adds up to missing 3 entire days of school by the end of the year
- Pupils might feel awkward and embarrassed going into the classroom when everyone else is already settled
- When one person arrives late everyone loses out – the class is disrupted and the teacher must take time away from the other pupils to explain what is going on for the lesson

There are also very serious legal consequences for parents and carers when children are persistently late. If your child has a high level of lateness you will receive a warning letter. After this, continued lateness could result in a Penalty Notice (Fines are set at £120 per parent, per child, per offence. This will be reduced to £60 if the fine is paid within 28 days.) If the fine is not paid by the end of a 42 day period parents will be taken to court under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

If you have any concerns about your child's punctuality please talk to us.

Give your child the best possible chance to succeed – ensure they arrive on time each day.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

APPENDIX 4

Example: Warning Letter to Parents about Persistent Lateness

***** Schools do not have to use this exact letter; however, the text in bold must be included in any letter if EWS is to take statutory action on a case *****

Dear _____,

Re: Persistent Lateness

I am writing to inform you that your child _____ is persistently late for school. **Between *date* and *date* he/she was late on ____ occasions and missed ____ hours of education.**

When pupils arrive late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson. This can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. Your child may also feel awkward arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled. Furthermore, when one pupil arrives late, it disrupts the entire class and the teacher – everyone's education is compromised.

Further lateness may result in you being served with a Penalty Notice or a summons to court. Parents have a duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and failure to do so is an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

You are invited to attend a meeting on _____ to discuss your child's attendance. Meanwhile, if anything can be done to support _____ getting to school on time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The school's education welfare officer may be in contact with you about this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

CC: Education Welfare Officer