

ST. BERNADETTE'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2024-2025

“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 ensure attendance a priority for all those associated with the school, including parents, pupils, teachers and governors.
- To improve outcomes for all children.

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.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

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.

Parents* are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly and arrive to school on time”.

*Definition of parent: Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 A parent in relation to any child or young person, includes any person:- a) all natural parents, whether they are married or not; b) who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for him/her; or c) who has care of him/her This also includes all absent parents who must have regular contact and an ability to influence the child including his/her attendance (separated parents who do not accompany the other parent on the unauthorised leave should not be included). Parental partners can be included (whether or not they are married or the natural parent of the child as they have ‘care’ of the child. If a pupil lives with a grandparent or older sibling as their main carer they can also be included as they are the main care provider. It is also important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Who is responsible for attendance issues in school?

- St Bernadette’s have a whole school approach to attendance where all staff are responsible for promoting attendance and raising concerns around attendance.
- Should staff have concerns, they should discuss these with parents where possible. If concerns persist, they should then speak to Mrs Shalvey and Mrs Payne.
- 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.

We work with parents, students, and external agencies to try to resolve any issues that may impact on a child’s attendance, and to offer early help and interventions as soon as possible.

In those rare cases where we are unable to make meaningful contact with parents, or where parents do not engage with school’s offer of support, and the issue with school absence continues, we are asked by BCC to make a more formal early help referral to BCT (Birmingham Children’s Trust)

This referral does not require parental consent.

As a parent you can help us by:

- Completing the online absence form which you will find on the website, or ringing before 8.30am 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.
- 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/home visits as soon as possible. We will try to contact parents on the first morning of your child's absence when no contact has been made.
- 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 various rewards for 98+% attendance.
- Publish children's attendance rate on annual school reports.
- Contact parents if we have concerns regarding attendance and inviting parents to attend a FAM (Formal Attendance Meeting).
- Arrange for an EWO or a school representative to carry out announced or unannounced home visits (even though the child may be in school on that day or you have already notified us of the reason for absence) in order to make reasonable enquiries to ascertain why a child is absent, or to carry out safeguarding checks and offers of other Early Help support

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

Regular attendance at school is the responsibility of parents and carers. Under the 1996 Education Act parents commit an offence if the child does not attend school regularly. If your child cannot come to school because of illness, you should advise the school on the first day of absence. If no message is received, we will assume that your child is absent without your permission. We will then make every effort to contact you. It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned, we may make a 'home visit' or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' visit.

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 9.00am
- 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.
- Parents not feeling well enough to bring their child into school

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

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 9.00 am), are then marked in as late L on the administration machine by the Attendance Officer / secretary. Children arriving after 9:00 am 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 absences for each student for which no reason has been provided. The Attendance Officer selects the appropriate code and marks the Absence Report accordingly.

Absence Procedures

Procedure for Reporting an Absence

1. Absence form on website or first phone call – preferably before 8:30.

If no contact has been received



2. Parents will receive a text or phone call.

If no response



3. The child may receive an unauthorised absence. School will make every effort to make contact with parents.

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 8.30 am where possible.

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 overall attendance. If your child accumulates 3 or more occasions of absence due to sickness/diarrhoea, you may be asked to attend a meeting in school.

School has clear systems in place to escalate any concerns about high levels of absence due to illness, including agreements about accessing early help services in order to provide appropriate support to pupils, particularly for long term illness, or those experiencing anxiety or other mental health difficulties.

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

- Attendance is less than 94%
- There are frequent short term 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. As an example, if parents have to visit sick relatives, we would expect prior arrangements to be in place to ensure that the child can attend school.

- If the Head Teacher deems that the reasons for the request are exceptional and authorises the absence, a letter or telephone call 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.

We would ask that parents to inform us if a holiday is planned to avoid possible referrals to safeguarding agencies/police 101, where we are unable to see the child during a home visit.

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/EWO 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 legal intervention team from Birmingham City Council will be informed.

Escalating Procedure for Tackling Poor attendance and persistent absence

94% to 100% attendance: no evidence required. Regular communication from parents is sufficient.

- Below 94%, medical evidence maybe required.

Pupils with less than 94% are identified by the school attendance team half termly



School attendance team will contact parents to discuss ways to improve attendance and put strategies in place. E.g., early help.



FAM meeting letter sent to parents inviting them to attend a FAM meeting with the Educational Welfare Officer/attendance team and a contract must be signed.



No Improvement - If there are more than 10 or more unauthorised absences, a referral may be made to the council's legal intervention team.

Attendance and Punctuality

Parents of pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality gives cause for concern may be invited to attend an Early Help Meeting which will be chaired by a member of the Pastoral team or the Education Welfare Officer. This is a formal meeting to discuss the child's school attendance, identify any barriers in order to improve school attendance.

If the child's attendance is still a concern, they may be placed on a 'Support First' programme which the LA introduced in August 2024. Fines are set at £80 per parent, per child, per offence. If the fine is not paid by the end of a 28 day period, it rises to £160 for a further 7 days. Reminders to pay are not sent. For a second offence within a three-year period the discount does not apply and the cost is £160. If payment is not received, the local authority will withdraw the penalty notice and a case will be prepared for court under Section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act. Furthermore, parents who receive fines are now also liable to cover any court fees and costs.

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 and ready to start learning. Lateness is classed as any child coming into school between 8.45am and 9 am. If children arrive after 8:45 their usual doors will be closed and they must enter through the KS2 gate/door, whereby they will receive a late code. All children arriving after 9.00am

must enter through the office. Lateness after 9.00am is classed as an unauthorised absence (code U as per DFE compulsory attendance codes).

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.

Schools may ask that parents cover the costs of any child that is late being collected.

In excessive or persistent cases, school may ask for advice from Children's Social Care (CASS)

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.

Class attendance is recorded in the school newsletter each fortnight.

Termly attendance

Attendance figures are recorded for individual pupils. At the end of each term every pupil with 98% and above attendance will wear their own clothes. Pupils with 100% attendance are also be rewarded with a film afternoon or school based reward.

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 and the Local Authority:

- 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 pastoral team 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: October 2024

Appendix 1



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CODES - DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved educational activity
K	LA arranged provision at a place other than a school	Approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity
W	Work experience	Approved educational activity
C	Absent with leave (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
C1	Absent due to participating in a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad	Authorised absence
C2	Part-time timetable	Authorised absence
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J1	Interview	Authorised absence
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence

OFFICIAL

D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Not counted in possible attendances
Q	Lack of transport or boarding access arrangements arranged by LA	Not counted in possible attendances
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y1	Transport normally provided by LA or school not available	Not counted in possible attendances
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel due to local, national or international emergency	Not counted in possible attendances
Y3	School partially closed	Not counted in possible attendances
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Not counted in possible attendances
Y5	Pupil in criminal justice detention	Not counted in possible attendances
Y6	Travel or attendance contrary to public health guidance or law on transmission of disease	Not counted in possible attendances
Y7	Unable to attend due to unavoidable cause	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils (planned closure)	Not counted in possible attendances

KEY

Present
Approved Education Activity (Present)
Authorised absence
Unauthorised absence
Not counted in possible attendances