

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

# Attendance Policy



“Doing our best for God”

---

**Signed:** *Olivia Dowling* (Family Support Worker/SENDCO)

**Date:** July 2024

**Review Date:** July 2026

## Introduction

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School have always believed that very high levels of attendance at school are important if children are to achieve well and be successful in their education as any absence will have an impact on their learning.

Regular attendance is vital, parents and carers together with all St Bernadette's staff, have a part to play in ensuring that each child's full potential is achieved.

The following policy is based upon guidance from the Department for Education: **Working together to improve School Attendance** Polished: 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Applies from: 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024

## Rationale

- Good relationships - The heart of all learning.
- St Bernadette's aim to support good attendance in providing a happy, calm, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.
- We see supporting and improving pupils' attendance is the responsibility of everyone within the St Bernadette's community which includes all staff, the school governors, parents and carers, the local authority and the church.

## Aims

In order to continue building on the overall attendance of pupils in school we aim:

- to make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents/carers, teachers and governors.
- to provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
- to further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.

## Definitions

It is at the Head Teacher's discretion as to whether a child's absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised, with support from the Attendance Lead and the Pupil Welfare Officer (PWO) and ultimately adhering to statutory requirements.

## **Authorised Absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. As you are aware we are not allowed to approve any absences throughout the school year, unless exceptional circumstances. This also includes appointments unless we have seen the evidence - ie hospital letter, appointment card, screenshots of the appointment. If your child has been seen by the GP or other medical professional a copy of the prescription will be accepted.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school and gives the reason that it was to go shopping for school shoes or the child was tired after an event it will not be authorised.

## **Unauthorised Absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## **Persistent Absence (PA)**

The DFE defines a 'persistent absentee' (PA) as a pupil who, at any point in the year, has accumulated absence at **10%** or more of the available sessions regardless of whether or not any of it is authorised. The PA status may change as the terms progress but these pupils are at particular risk of achieving poor outcomes at school and beyond.

### **Registration:**

### **Codes:**

There are a series of codes which are used to denote authorised and unauthorised absence.

It is the school's responsibility to ensure the correct codes are recorded and that patterns and trends in children's absence are analysed.

### **Late Pupils:**

Pupils who arrive before registration closes at 9:00am are marked using the normal '/' code. Pupils arriving after 9:01 but before 9:30 will be marked using the 'L' code. Pupils arriving after 9:30 will be marked with the U code which indicates that a child arrived after 9:30 and that this was unauthorised by the school.

---

### **Medical appointments**

Children will be marked as M for a medical appointment.

### **Requests for leave of absence**

We believe that all children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. For this reason, as a general rule, we do not authorise leave of absence (including holidays) in term time.

### **Religious Observance:**

The DCSF recommends the use of Code R when children are absent from school to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals. Parents should be encouraged to give advance notice.

This is interpreted to mean that if the parent's religious organisation sets the day as a religious festival then the school must authorise the absence. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parent's religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

If the religious body has not set the day apart, there is no requirement for the school to approve the absence or grant a leave of absence. Additional holidays and days off linked to the religious festival, but not "exclusively set aside for religious observance" by the religious body, are not marked using Code R.

### **Roles and responsibilities:**

All members of the school community have roles and responsibilities in promoting and ensuring good attendance and punctuality

### **Role of the pupils:**

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the education opportunities available.

All pupils will:

- Not leave school without permission.
- Respect themselves and others.
- Encourage friendship and a sense of belonging.
- Be happy and encourage others to feel happy

- Inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are being bullied or feel unhappy in school.

### **Role of parents:**

Parents have an essential role in ensuring their child's good attendance.

We ask parents to:

- Establish good attendance habits by acting as a role model and showing the children that good attendance and punctuality is important.
- Praise and reward good attendance, even small successes, e.g. getting ready quickly, even if resisting going to school.
- Talk regularly with their child about school and how they feel about it. Children are more likely to want to attend and learn if they feel supported and their anxieties are listened to.
- Contact the school by phone on the Absence line or email as soon as possible to say why their child is absent, and when they are expected to return.
- Only grant days at home for genuine illness.
- If appropriate, arrange for a friend to take a child to school if a sibling is sick.
- Avoid taking holidays in school time.
- Ensure that wherever possible, medical appointments are made outside of the school day.
- Know routines of the school day to avoid issues, e.g. ensuring children have their P.E. kits on the right days.
- Establish a good bedtime routine, so that their child can sleep well, get enough sleep and make mornings less of a struggle.

***The government expects all children to have 96% or above attendance throughout each school year.***

The government also state that:

- Children whose attendance falls between 96 and 90% are classed as being 'at risk of persistent absence.'
  - Children whose attendance falls below 90% are classed as being 'Persistent Absence'.
-

## **What does this mean for Parents and Carers?**

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 -Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. This can be by regular attendance at school, at an alternative provision or otherwise (e.g. the parent can choose to educate their child at home).

## **Other Leave**

The following list of "exceptional circumstances" has been produced to illustrate the types of reasons where a Head Teacher may grant leave of absence during term time. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list but indicative of the type of circumstances where leave will be granted to a child:

- (a) Death of a close relative
- (b) Funeral of a close relative
- (c) Wedding of a close relative
- (d) Religious Observance of a major feast

Where one of these circumstances applies, the Head Teacher may grant one day's leave of absence or, when appropriate - for example in the case of the death or funeral of a close relative- more than one consecutive day.

For the purposes of this guidance the definition of a close relative/immediate family is defined as a child's:

- (a) Father, mother, step-father or step-mother
- (b) Brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step brother or step sister (c) Grandparent, uncle or auntie

- **The school will require the parent to complete an absence form and/or write a letter to explain why the child will not be in school on specific dates.**
- **If your child is absent from school and no reason has been given to school, we will try and contact all the contact numbers you have provided to school. If this is not possible, we may instigate a safeguarding concern and this may result in a visit from either the Family Support Worker (FSW) and/or our school's Pupil Welfare Officer (PWO) conducting a safeguarding home visit.**

## **Medical and Dental Appointments**

It is expected that all routine (non-emergency) medical, dental or ophthalmic checks will be scheduled either after normal school hours or during the school holidays. This also applies as far as possible to elective minor surgery. It is recognised, however, that this is not always possible. If it is not possible for a parent to arrange an appointment outside of the school day, the parent should endeavour to arrange for the appointment at a time that will cause the least disruption to the child's education, for example at the beginning or end of the school day.

- **The school will require the parent to bring the appointment card and/or hospital letter so that it can be copied and put on the child's records. This will ensure that your child has the correct mark entered on the school register.**

## **Illness**

School Attendance is central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated: 'Pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school.'

Staff at school can administer certain prescribed medication - please see the school website for our medical policy.

However, we do not expect parents to bring their child into school if they are too ill to attend. Minor ailments, such as a headache or slight cold are not acceptable reasons for failing to attend school. (The NHS has pages on-line that can offer advice to whether you should send your child to school or to seek medical advice)

**If your child is absent from school, it is essential that you inform the school on the first day of absence by 9.00am, either in person, telephone or email.**

- If your child's attendance has fallen to 93% or below the school will not approve any absences of illness without proof of the illness. This could be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip/appointment card confirming the visit or a prescription or prescribed medicine bottle dated for the time of the absence. Any of the above should be presented to a member of the main office, Senior Management Team or Family Support Worker. (Please note: the school is not asking any parent/carer to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for any cost)
-

- If your child has repeated absences of illness, school require you to obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery or local pharmacy as recommend by the government.
- Parents should be aware that any time a child is absent from school, whether authorised or unauthorised, it will have an effect on your child's attendance and the child will not achieve 100% attendance.
- Parents will be notified by telephone &/or letter if their child's attendance falls below 95% or they have three broken weeks. The child's attendance will be monitored by the FSW and any improvements will be acknowledged.
- If a child's attendance falls to 93% or below, parents will be invited to come into school to discuss how school, PWO and parents can work together to ensure that the child's attendance improves. This can include letters to consultants, referrals to school nurse or referral to other agencies that could offer support to the child and their families.
- If a pupil has an unauthorised absence for 10 days, under the new legislation, the Local Authority will be informed. The Pupil Welfare Officer (PWO) and/or School will undertake a welfare safeguarding visit to the child's family home to see the child in person.

### **Fines & Court Action**

Due to the changes to Education- related plenty August 2024 school will have to consider the issuing for penalty notices for pupils who are absent from school. The school will not benefit from any money collected from the penalty notices and do not issue the fines.

### **Monitoring**

Attendance is monitored weekly by the FSW and PWO.

Data is collected regularly through the academic year and sent, as part of the data collection process, to the school Governors, Local Authority and Department for Education.