



St Benedict's Catholic Primary School Attendance Policy

November 2023

Regular school attendance is essential for children and young people to maximise the opportunities available to them, reach their potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

We are committed to promoting good attendance and punctuality by supporting all parents and pupils and acting early to prevent poor attendance. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind.

Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 requires you to make sure that your child attends school, on time, every time the school is open.

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/09/02/back-to-school-week-everything-you-need-to-know-about-school-attendance/>

Leave in term-time:

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion and can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. It is very likely that it will be granted.

The 'G' code (unauthorised attendance code) will be entered in the register where the school has not granted a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away longer than the period of leave granted.

It is important to note that unauthorised absences mean that a **referral to the Local Authority is highly likely** and as parents you may be subject to a fine and a penalty notice may be issued.

Unauthorised absences include:

Code G: Holiday not granted by the school or in excess of the period determined by the school;

Code O: Absent without authorisation;

Code U: arrived in school after registration closed.

A referral will be made to the local authority for holidays (or unauthorised days) in term-time of **5 days or more**. This might be 5 consecutive days or 5 individual days. The referral will be made if children miss 5 days (10 sessions) or more.

The penalty is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is unpaid after 28 days, the Local Authority may decide to prosecute for the original offence. There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.

This is a last resort, and we want to work with you to avoid this. However we have a legal obligation to ensure your child is in school during term time and we want the best for them. If you would like to discuss any part of this information with the Head Teacher or a member of the governing body, please make an appointment at the school office.

GREEN GROUP 95% - 100%

WELL DONE - This is a GOOD level of attendance

We will: celebrate this level of attendance in end of term assemblies, with house tokens and end of year reports

AMBER GROUP 90% to 95%

This level of attendance is a cause for concern

We will:

inform you that your child's attendance is dropping and work with you to improve it and closely monitor this level of absence

We may:

make house visits

request to meet with you

request permission to refer your child to the school nurse

initiate an Early Help Assessment with a family support worker

issue a monitoring & warning letter

request medical confirmation for all extended periods of sickness

RED GROUP Less than 90%

This is a significant and concerning level of absence

Your child is now considered to be a PERSISTENT ABSENCE PUPIL

We will closely monitor and work with you to improve the attendance.

If the attendance does not improve, we may refer to the local authority who will consider legal action. This could be a £60 fine (per parent including step-parents and per child).

WHY ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY MATTERS

Across one school year:

- Less than 5 days absence = 97.3% attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 92.6% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 89.4% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 84.2% attendance

If a child's attendance is as low as 80% this means that they have missed approximately 39 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

Pupils should always **try** to come into school unless they have sickness, diarrhoea or other contagious diseases. The school can always send children home if needed. Over the counter **medicine** and prescription medicine can be given in school – just give the medicine to the office and fill in a form.

If children are upset at the thought of coming in to school, we will work with you to build their resilience and may take advice from Emotionally Healthy Schools. We will work with the child to understand why they are reluctant to come into school and celebrate their achievement when they do.

Absences for the management of long-term/diagnosed illnesses and disabilities will be exempt from absence monitoring in collaboration with the head teacher. All cases of low attendance will be assessed on an individual basis. We aim to support all pupils who are protected under the Equality Act and the SEND Code of Practice.

What to do if your child cannot come to school:

Parents/carers should telephone the school office and explain about the absence, leave a message on the answerphone or pop in to the school office before 9.15am. Please give as much information about the illness as possible. The register is a legal document and needs to be kept accurately. If you leave a message without enough information, we will have to contact you. If a child is absent and no acceptable reason is provided, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

If the child has seen the doctor, you can provide a screenshot of the appointment confirmation, or a photograph of a prescription label.

If parents/carers are unable to get a medical appointment outside of school hours, parents/carers need to provide the school with an appointment letter/card/screenshot of appointment confirmation.

Please help your child to maintain good attendance by booking doctor, dentist, or optician appointments either in the school holidays, after school or at weekends. Please provide the school with an appointment card/letter/screenshot if your child **needs** to leave school for an appointment.

What we will do to support good attendance:

- make school a positive and happy place
- teach children about good hygiene
- ensure children wash hands before meals
- sterilise equipment when necessary
- ensure the building is clean by disinfecting tables, door handles and toilets daily
- support children with their social communication development and create a safe and nurturing environment so that children want to come to school
- provide nutritionally balanced meals and encourage healthy snacks
- educate children about a healthy diet and exercise to aid health
- take advice from external specialists to support children who have anxiety about coming to school

Policies we have referred to when drawing up the policy:

Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DFE) Guidance to help schools, academy trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance including roles and responsibilities. (May 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/09/02/back-to-school-week-everything-you-need-to-know-about-school-attendance/>