

# St Benedict's Catholic Primary School Attendance Policy



September 2024

**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.

You do not have the right to take your child on holiday in term time. It is a criminal offence for a parent/carer to 'fail to secure their child's regular attendance at school'.

If you want to take your child out of school, the parent/carer of the child they live with must apply to the school in writing explaining the exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher will decide whether to approve the application. They will then write to you with their decision.

If the Head teacher does not approve the application and you still take your child out of school, the school will record the absence as unauthorised. You may get a [Penalty notice](#).

If a parent/carer does not apply for a leave of absence and/or the school has reason to believe your child has been on holiday during term time, the school may record the absence as unauthorised. You may then get a [Penalty notice](#).

### School absence notice to improve

You may get a notice to improve if your child is absent for 5 or more days / 10 or more unauthorised sessions (a session is a half day), within a rolling 10-week period which can span over different school terms or school years.

The letter will give you a period of 20 days in which to improve the child's attendance.

### School absence penalty notice (fine)

On the 19 August 2024, the new National Framework for Penalty Notices came into force.

We can send you a penalty notice (PN) in either of the following situations:

- when you have received a notice to improve letter and there is no improvement in attendance, or the improvement has not been sustained.
- you have taken your child out of school in term-time without the Head teacher's permission.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. Only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent/carer in respect of a particular pupil will be charged £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In this circumstance the Local Authority may refer the matter to court. You could get a criminal record and you may be fined up to £1,000.

### How to pay a penalty notice

#### [Pay a penalty notice](#)

### What happens if you do not pay the penalty notice

If you do not pay within 28 days this may result in the Local Authority referring the matter to court. You could get a criminal record and you may be fined up to £1,000.

Full details about our approach on the [Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices \(PDF, 281KB\)](#) and the [Working Together to improve school attendance statutory guidance from 19 August 2024](#) for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities 2024.

### Attendance prosecution

If your child fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, you may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the Local Authority.

If the Local Authority decides to pursue legal action this will be under Section 444 of the education Act 1986. There are two possible levels of prosecution.

- S444 (1) Fine up to £1000.
- S444 (1a) This is an aggravated offence and used when we view that the parent/carer is aware of the absence from school and fails to act. This can include a fine up to £2500 and or a custodial sentence.

### Other legal interventions

In exceptional circumstances there are a range of other interventions open to the Local Authority.

**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 but this does not mean we can authorise holidays in term-time.*

### **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.

If you do not call school to inform them that your child is absent, we will call all the contacts on the emergency contact list that you have given to school (please note that this will include the other parent in separated families). If we are unable to confirm the reason for the absence, we will make a house visit. If we cannot establish that your child is safe, we will make a referral for a police welfare check.

### **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
- send emails at the end of each half-term to let you know your child's attendance

### **Incentives:**

On a Friday, children who have been in school every day that week will receive a raffle ticket. 5 small prizes will be given each Friday

At the end of an academic year, there will be a prize draw: children who have 100% attendance will be entered in a draw to win a £50 voucher, a £25 voucher prize draw for children with 95-99.9% and a £10 voucher prize drawer for those with attendance between 90 and 94.9%

Certificates and badges will be awarded to all who have attendance of 98% or above

The house with the highest attendance will receive £5 a week and all houses above 95% will receive £1. This money will be collected for the end of year house party on 11<sup>th</sup> July.

### **Policies we have referred to when drawing up the policy:**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance\\_-\\_August\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf)

<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/>

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school-attendance/action-when-children-miss-school.aspx>