



St Benedict's Catholic High School  
Attendance Policy  
Including Child Missing Education

## **Aims of the Policy**

To promote regular attendance thus offering all pupils equal access to learning.

A School's attendance policy shapes the school ethos and makes a statement about how the school values and includes all the people in it. Regular attendance and punctuality is an important life skill which is vital as pupils seek to become organized and reliable – two qualities valued by all employers.

Successful schools extend themselves beyond their obvious physical and social limitations and are not fixated on academic performance.

They maintain successful learning environments for all pupils, and this begins a culture in which staff and students are encouraged to enjoy membership of a cheerful and collaborative community that is concerned for human potential in its fullest meaning.

There definitely is a 'happiness' factor to schools that are successful and fully inclusive.

## **Attendance**

Attendance at school up to the age of 16 is a legal requirement and it is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child attends school regularly. In order to encourage maximum attendance levels, both staff and pupils need to work within a framework of good practice that both supports and helps to motivate students, and is consistent across the school. Pupils should aim to meet the target of 96% or above attendance. 100% attendance is certainly possible, but in the event of your child being away from school it is essential that you, the parent/ guardian/ carer, inform the school for reasons for absence.

## **Why?**

- The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reason for absence have to be reported to the Governors, Local Authority (LA) and the Department for Education (DfE).
- Parents, guardians and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's Attendance Policy as any absence will have a huge impact on your child's learning. Regular school attendance is essential and parents, guardians and carers, together with our school staff all have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved.
- Pupils are expected to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absence:

(1) **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. Examples may include but is not exhaustive:

Illness

Medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time

Emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

(2) **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request.

- e.g
- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
  - Truancy before or during the school day
  - Absences which have never been properly explained
  - Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
  - Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
  - Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

- Please be aware that when a parent telephones the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness, or other circumstances, this may not automatically be authorised. Your child's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.
- Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or a cold is not acceptable. Repeated absence will require us to obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit, or prescription or medicine bottle. Please note: the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost.
- There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievements. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem.
- Any pupil who is absent for ten sessions (5 days) over a period of 6 weeks will automatically be referred to the Education Investigation Service (EIS), as per government guidelines.
- The achievement and maintenance of high levels of attendance is the shared responsibility of parents, guardians or carers, St Benedict's with Governing Body and the Local Authority.
- Safeguarding: - Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:
  - Attendance
  - Behaviour Management
  - Health and Safety
  - Access to the Curriculum
  - Anti-bullying
  - Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter

### **Objectives of the policy**

- Meet the Government attendance targets set for St Benedict's.
- Create a clearly understood attendance procedure that is effectively communicated to and understood by parents, guardians and carers.
- Ensure pupils are in school for the maximum number of days.

This Policy is designed to help all concerned adults to enable children to attend school regularly and therefore be offered the most consistent access to learning as is possible.

### **School Responsibilities**

- To communicate clearly the attendance procedure and expectations of the school.

- Maintain appropriate attendance data.
- Have appropriate registration in place.
- To follow up absences and lateness if parents/ guardians and carers have not communicated with the school: initially with a text to your child's primary contact.
- Inform parents, guardians and carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.
- Inform parents, guardians and carers on a termly basis when your child's attendance is below the statutory 95% minimum
- To ensure the Attendance policy is accessible through the school website.
- To have systematic and consistent daily records which chart absence and lateness.
- To report to the Governing Body on attendance twice a year.
- To report all referrals to the Governing Body as appropriate.
- To consistently administer the attendance procedure.
- To ensure that children register twice daily: at the start of the morning and during the afternoon.
- To promote good attendance.

#### **Parent, Guardian and Carer responsibilities**

- To have children in school ready for registration by the start of the day at 8:50am.
- To inform school on **every** day of any absence.
- To request leave 4 weeks in advance (where possible).
- To make applications for leave in writing on St Benedict's 'Leave of Absence Form', giving the reason for the request.
- To work with the school to improve lateness and attendance.
- To avoid medical and dental appointments (where possible) during the school day.

If parents, guardians and carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should:

- Talk to their child, it may be something simple that needs your help resolving
- Talk to the school attendance officer

#### **The process for monitoring attendance**

The school will log instances of absence and lateness and discuss weekly. Where issues persist, the following will be initiated (stages 1-5):

- Stage 1: Where there are initial concerns about attendance and punctuality the school will write to parent/carers informing them of the concern.
- Stage 2: If the concerns persist, the school's attendance officer will ring parents to discuss concerns and the pupil will be placed into an attendance workshop. Senior Management will be informed.
- Stage 3: If the pupil's attendance is still a concern, parents/carers will be asked to attend a meeting with SLT and sign an Attendance Agreement.
- Stage 4: Request for Medical evidence and confirmation that if concerns persist the case will be referred to the Education Investigation Team (EIS). **This stage is not always applicable.**

Stage 5: Formal referral to the Education Investigation Service (EIS) to deal with the on-going issues.

**Governors will be notified and will have to agree if there are to be any stage 4 referrals.**

#### **Absences during term time**

- Application for term time leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed 'Application for leave of absence during term time'. This may be obtained from the school office.
- Leave of absence will only be granted where the Headteacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parents, guardians and carers will be informed within 7 school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

It is important that you understand the circumstances when leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below (95%) or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking holiday leave.
- Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.
- Any pupil who is absent for ten sessions (5 days) over a period of 6 weeks will automatically be referred to the Education Investigation Service (EIS), as per County guidelines.

There are approximately 190 school days (380 sessions) a year to which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 65 day (130 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

*Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.*

#### ***The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007***

*Amendments have been made to the 2007 Regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments, as described below, will come into force on 1 September 2013.*

*The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents must pay £60 if they pay within 28 days; or £120 if they pay within 42 days.*

*Amendments to 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.*

### **Lateness**

Punctuality is an important life skill. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. The registers are monitored daily and those pupils whose attendance falls below 90% are our focus. We may refer these pupils on to the Education Investigation Team.

- Children must be in school by 8:50am each day.
- Children will be marked 'L' (late) if they arrive between 9am-11:00am.
- If the arrival at school is after registers have closed at 11am, the pupil will receive a 'U'. This equates to an absence although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety.
- Lateness will be monitored weekly by school.
- Anyone arriving late, after 9am, will need to come into school via the main entrance to get registered.

### **Persistent Absence (PA)**

As a school, we are focused on improving overall school attendance and reducing persistent absence. We do this through working on initiatives in partnership within school and other agencies. Our aim is to raise awareness of the problems and possible solutions to parent's/carers and pupils.

A pupil is defined as a 'Persistent Absentee' if they miss approximately 10% or more of all possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence at this level will cause considerable harm to your child's education and we need every parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the level of PA or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance system and brought to the attention of our Attendance Officer and where appropriate court action may be deemed appropriate.

### **Leaving during the school day**

If a pupil needs to leave school for any reason – medical, dental appointment etc:

- A written confirmation of this appointment is needed from the parent or guardian
- The pupil reports to the main office where he or she is signed out.
- On return to school the pupil reports back to the main office where he or she is signed back in

PUPILS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE SCHOOL UNLESS COLLECTED FROM RECEPTION BY PARENT OR GUARDIAN.

### **Home Visits**

Home visits may be made by members of staff where attendance or a child whereabouts is a Cause for Concern. This is at the discretion of the school and may be for attendance or child welfare reasons. If home visits are carried out, two members of staff will undertake these home visits at all times and the home visit will be logged on MyConcerns.

### **Children Missing in Education**

#### **Definition**

A Child Missing in Education (CME) is defined as a child or young person of compulsory academy age who is not attending school, not placed in alternative provision by an LA, and who is not receiving a suitable education elsewhere. This definition also includes children who are receiving an education, but one that is not suitable; this could include children who are not receiving full-time education suitable to their needs, e.g. age, ability, aptitude, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Children go missing from education for a number of reasons including:

- they don't start school at the appropriate time and so they do not enter the educational system
- they are removed by their parents
- behaviour and/or attendance difficulties
- they cease to attend, due to exclusion, illness or bullying
- they fail to find a suitable school place after moving to a new area
- the family move home regularly
- problems at home

The law requires all children between the ages of 5 and 16 to be in full time education.

#### **Parents' responsibilities**

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education. Some parents may elect to educate their children at home and may withdraw them from school at any time to do so, unless they are subject to a School Attendance Order.

Where a parent notifies the school in writing that they are home educating, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform the local authority. However, where parents orally indicate that they intend to withdraw their child to be home educated, the school should consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans or statements of special educational needs (SEN) can be home educated. Where the EHC plan or statement sets out SEN provision that the

child should receive at home, the local authority is under a duty to arrange that provision. Where the EHC plan or statement names a school or type of school as the place where the child should receive his or her education but the parent chooses to home educate their child, the local authority must assure itself that the provision being made by the parent is suitable. In such cases, the local authority must review the plan or statement annually to assure itself that the provision set out in it continues to be appropriate and that the child's SEN continue to be met.

## **School Responsibilities**

Children missing from education can mean either a child being unenrolled or a child on extended absence.

The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence.

If the school hasn't heard of a parent/carer by day two of absence, school, where possible and if capacity allows, will conduct a home visit.

If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school may contact the Local Authority who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

School have a legal duty to inform the appropriate LA if:

- A child is absent for 10 days following on from a period of approved leave
- A child is absent for 20 consecutive days without approved leave
- A child fails to attend school regularly
- A child is deleted from the register when the next school is not known

Parents should be aware that Warwickshire County Council reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their child/children to school on a regular basis.

With due regard for Children Missing Education (September 2020), St Benedict's Catholic High School will notify local authorities when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the 15 grounds listed in the regulations (Annex A). These 15 grounds continue to include:

- When the family has apparently moved away
- When the child has been certified as medically unfit to attend
- When the child is in custody for more than four months
- When the child has been permanently excluded
- The child has been taken out of school to be home educated

This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points and/or when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally

provided by us. When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority will include contact details as well as the reason for removal. We will also notify local authorities within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a nonstandard transition point. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point and/or at the start of the first year of education normally provided by us.

We will obtain written confirmation from parents/carers if and when we find out that one of our pupils is being removed to be educated outside of the school system. A copy of this will be forwarded to the appropriate Local Authority.

### **Safeguarding**

- There are significant risks for children who regularly go missing from education.
- All children, regardless of circumstance, are entitled to full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any SEN they may have.
- Procedures are in place to identify and respond to this, particularly those who are repeatedly missing or where there is an emerging pattern (see above).
- With due regard for Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2018), St Benedict's Catholic High School acknowledges the importance of information sharing between schools and appropriate Local Authorities to help identify children missing education and help protect children from potential harm.
- A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect (including CSE, FGM, travelling to conflict zones and forced marriage) and staff must be alert to any possible signs or indicators.
- We will review information from the government's 'missing children and adults strategy' and 'children missing education' guidance when appropriate and applicable.
- Please see the Safeguarding and other relevant policies for further information.

**Policy Date:**

**Policy Review:**