

ST. BEDE'S CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL

celebrates life and learning



ABSENCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

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MISSION STATEMENT

St. Bede, patron of our school, wrote:

"It was always my delight to learn and to teach".

We are a celebrating community, living the Gospel Values, committed to educating children in the light of the Catholic Faith.

We journey together so that we

"Might have life - life in all its fullness".

John 10:10

AIM

The aim of this Policy is to set out the way in which St. Bede's Catholic Junior monitors and promotes the attendance and punctuality of its pupils. The school is committed to maximising the potential of every student and good attendance and punctuality are essential to this aim. We feel this will be achieved, with the support of parents/carers by ensuring that leave of absence will not be taken in school time, other than in exceptional circumstances. Absence during term time for any reason interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning and disrupts the educational progress of pupils.

St. Bede's Catholic Junior School is a successful school and every student plays a part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Pupils should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

THE LAW

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 Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

From 1 September 2013 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 amends the 2006 Regulations and makes clear that Head Teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your student's regular attendance at school (above 96% attendance) is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The Designated Senior Leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Lesley Harrington and can be contacted via lharrington@stbedesjuniorschool.co.uk

Class teachers

Class teachers are:

- responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office each day.

School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the Pastoral Lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, advising when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Celebrate good attendance by monitoring class weekly attendance in assemblies / Rejoice in Song
- Award the Attendance Cup to the class with the highest attendance each half term
- Award badges, trophies and certificates to students with good attendance
- Inform you if your child's attendance or punctuality falls below the acceptable level for our school
- Give parents/carers details about attendance half-termly
- Award pupils with 100% attendance each term.

ABSENCE

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably on the morning of the absence. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time, such as hospital appointments), emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Educational Welfare Service using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- 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
- social, economic and cultural considerations within the family and community
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- unnecessary absence due to unexplained illness.

EMOTIONALLY BASED SCHOOL NON-ATTENDANCE (EBSNA)

Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance is a term used to describe children and young people who experience challenges in attending school due to negative feelings (such as anxiety). EBSNA is commonly associated with emotional and physical distress, and a reluctance to attend school, which can lead to reduced attendance and further anxiety regarding school.

As a school, we recognise that working with children and parents/carers in a holistic way is key to addressing this issue. We are working closely with Halton Educational Psychology Service in order to ensure that we have staff trained in this area who have access to appropriate resources helping to identify and assess individuals needs and implement interventions.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance is 90% or below for any reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any student's educational prospects and we need parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

Persistent Absenteeism pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence to notify us of the reason for your child's absence before 9:00am.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Visit your home address (as required) to ensure there are no other issues regarding absence which require school support.

Monitoring:

Each half term an attendance tracker is produced showing every student's percentage attendance. The Headteacher and Pastoral Lead look at student's attendance under 96% with a particular focus on those under 90% (the figure classed as persistent absence). Parents may be contacted either by letter or phone informing them that their student's attendance and/or punctuality is low and a meeting may be requested. The purpose of the meetings will be to discuss reasons for absence and consider additional support that could help to improve attendance.

Telephone Numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parent/carers about many things, including absence, so we need to have accurate contact numbers at all times. In order to help us to help parents/carers and students, we make sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed.

Education Welfare Service:

Parent/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any attendance problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the student to an Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement through use of a Notice to Improve or Target Letter. If these other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

A first Penalty Notice will be issued after 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 weeks. The current fine is £80 if paid within 21 days (rising to £160 and paid within a further 7 days). If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parents/carers in respect of the same pupil they must pay £160 (to be paid in 28 days). Any unpaid penalty notices will result in a summons.

A third Penalty Notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first Penalty Notice. Therefore, alternative action will be taken.

“If any student of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.”

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Education Welfare Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

PUNCTUALITY

Unfortunately, some students persistently arrive late for school. Every student should be on the playground at 8:45 a.m. and ready for learning at 8:50 a.m. Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your student misses the start of the day they can miss learning and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons; this can be embarrassing for the student and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8.50am and it is expected that all pupils will be in class by this time. Your student will receive a late mark if they are not in class by 8.50am. A member of the school staff will be on duty at the pupil entry door, however this door closes at 8.50am and pupils must enter via the Office if they arrive after this time. At 9:30 am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your student arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or Education Welfare Officer to resolve the problem. However, parents/carers are encouraged to approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child(ren) to school on time.

LATENESS HAS A NEGATIVE EFFECT, IT CAN

- disrupt lessons
- affect achievement
- embarrass and upset children.

BEING LATE ADDS UP TO LOSS OF LEARNING

- 5 minutes late every day adds up to 3 days lost each year
- 10 minutes adds up to 6 days lost
- 15 minutes adds up to 10 days lost
- 20 minutes adds up to 13 days lost
- 30 minutes adds up to 19 days lost

**BEING ON TIME MEANS NOT MISSING OUT
EVERY DAY MATTERS - EVERY LESSON COUNTS!**

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

It is not advisable to take your child on holiday during term time, as this causes disruption to his / her education and can seriously, adversely affect your student's attainment. Schools must follow the law in this regard. All holidays taken in term time count as absence.

In exceptional circumstances the Headteacher will consider a request for leave of absence for one period of absence during the academic year.

Exceptional Circumstances

The Headteacher or person designated by the Headteacher will determine what are considered to be exceptional circumstances.

The following may be examples of exceptional circumstances:

- To allow a pupil to return to their country of origin for family, religious or cultural reasons
- Unavoidable circumstances e.g. the parent/carer has inflexible leave allocation **and** this has been confirmed in writing by the employer.
- A family member is seriously ill.
- There has been a death or significant trauma in the family and a leave of absence is deemed appropriate.
- Leave of absence for children of serving members of the Armed Forces.

Additional Information

St. Bede's Catholic Junior School will ensure that all parents/carers receive a copy of this Absence and Punctuality Policy via the school website.

- Parents/carers will be required to complete a leave of absence request form available from the school office or school website and return it to school.
- Parents/carers may be required to attend an interview with the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer and/or Headteacher to discuss their request for a leave of absence.
- Parents/carers will normally be notified of the outcome of their application for a leave of absence within 10 school days of the date of the application.

If the leave of absence is not agreed by the school, but the pupil is absent on the requested dates, the absence will be recorded as 'O' this will mean that the absence has been recorded on the school attendance register as unauthorised.

Where a pupil is absent from school without permission of the school, the parent/carer of the pupil may be issued with a £60.00 Penalty Notice per parent per student. If the notice remains unpaid after 21 days the penalty increases to £120.00. If the notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the Local Authority may commence proceedings under section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act in the Magistrates Court.

Please note - Work will not be provided by staff for students to complete when on holiday/leave of absence in term time.

POLICY REVIEW

The Absence and Punctuality Policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher, staff and by the Governing Body in the light of changes in legislation; or on the advice of Halton Borough Council.

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

