

# The Federation of St Bede's and St Bernadette Catholic Schools



**WE LEARN, WE PLAY, WE CARE, WE PRAY**

## **Attendance Policy**

**Last review:** January 2019

**Next review:** January 2021

### **FEDERATION VISION**

Our vision is to provide all children with the best possible education, guided by the foundations of the Catholic faith, which develops their potential, prepares them for the future and inspires lifelong learning.



# Federation of St Bede's and St Bernadette Catholic Schools

## Aims

At St Bede's and St Bernadette schools we recognise that regular attendance in school is of vital importance and we actively promote the link between good attendance, good achievement and increased life chances and choices for pupils.

It is important for parents to understand that it is their legal obligation to ensure that their child attends school every day of the school year and to duly inform the school of any planned or unplanned absence from school during term time.

We endeavour to support and ensure that all our pupils receive the fullest opportunity to learn and succeed, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, ability or disability.

We aim to raise awareness amongst our parents of the importance of regular attendance at school and on the way we manage and monitor attendance data to ensure that our children attend school as frequently as possible.

We realise the impact that poor attendance has on achievement and confidence and in worst case scenarios the role that school attendance can play in identifying potential issues surrounding safeguarding children. We take our responsibilities in promoting good attendance extremely seriously.

With this in mind, we have worked very hard, alongside our Governors and Lambeth Educational Welfare Officer to produce a policy which sets out our aims, expectations and procedures, for the benefit of staff, parents, governors, children and all stakeholders alike as we strive to work together to improve attendance across our school.

## Defining Absence

Any time that your child spends away from school during term time is a form of **ABSENCE**. This includes lateness, being collected early from school, sickness, religious observances and other forms of special leave.

**The school reserves the right to query the legitimacy of any absence and to request evidence, medical or other, from the parent/carer to validate the absence and to form a judgement as to whether the absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised.**

## Attendance Policy and Procedures

Our whole school annual attendance target is 96%

Every parent/carer is expected to ensure that their children arrive to school on time and attend every morning and afternoon session throughout the school year unless there is a **genuine medical reason** for the child not being unable to do so.



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If a child is unable to attend school for any reason, the parent/carer **MUST** telephone the school by 9.20am on the morning of the first day of absence to inform the school of the reason for the absence and give an estimate of how long they will be absent for. This information will be noted immediately on the school's data system and monitored on a daily basis.

If a child is absent due to sickness and there are any concerns about the reason for the absence the school will look into the child's school medical records for any underlying reasons and contact the parent/carer to share concerns.

If a child is frequently absent from school or absent for a period of time which is more than 5 consecutive days for medical reasons, the school may contact a parent/carer to ask for more information or evidence of doctors/hospital appointments to satisfy the school as to the legitimacy of the absence.

For ongoing medical concerns, medical absence of more than a week or patterns of sickness, the school may make referral to external agencies, including the school nurse and your child's GP to provide additional information and support for the child and the family. The aim of such interventions is to facilitate the child to access school on a more regular basis.

Any absence without prior authorisation from the school which precedes or directly follows on from a holiday period will be unauthorised and will be reported to the Education Welfare Officer and may incur a fine. Should your child be absent during this period for medical reasons proof of evidence from the GP will be required.

Please note: An appointment card will not be accepted as proof of evidence.

### **Unexplained Absence**

If your child is absent for any other reason and you have not already informed the school then your child will be absent without permission and registered as **unauthorised absence**.

The school will make every effort to contact you regarding this absence and if we cannot make contact with you after 3 days, we will write to you regarding the matter and/or make a home visit.

If your child returns to school within the next 7 days, you will need to complete a Return to School Form on their first day back to school. The Assistant Headteacher will consider the details you state in your Return to School Form and depending on the circumstances, they will either maintain the unauthorised absence mark or where there is a special circumstance, they may apply an authorised mark for the child's absence. You may be called in to discuss the period of absence before this decision is made.

If your child is absent without any reason for 10 consecutive, the school will contact the Education Welfare Office to report your child as '**Child Missing Education**' and the school will notify the Lambeth Educational Welfare Service to conduct their investigations.

If, after a further 10 days, your child has not returned to school and you have still not contacted the school to explain why, we will write to you to inform you that your child will be taken off roll after 20 consecutive days.

Once your child is removed from the school roll, you will need to make a new application for a primary school place and this will be considered with all other children on the waiting list.



### **Reporting Sickness Absence**

If your child is so unwell that they cannot attend school, you must contact the school before the start of the school day.

You will be required to give a clear explanation/description of the illness and to inform the school of the expected duration of the absence. If your child does not return to school by the end of this expected period, you must call the school to inform them of the situation.

If your child is absent for more than 3 consecutive school days then a medical note is required or evidence that they have been seen by a doctor.

Whilst your child is absent from school they will be marked absent. On your child's return the parent/carer will be asked to complete a **Sickness Return to School Form** and to hand into the office, any medical notes relating to the sickness absence.

The school database will then be updated accordingly and your child's attendance will record the absence as sickness which is a form of **authorised absence**.

### **Monitoring Sickness Absence**

All sickness absence is closely monitored by the school

The school will contact the parent/carer where it is considered that excessive time off for sickness has occurred or where there is a lack of appropriate communication by the family regarding the length of time off or frequency of sickness spells.

The parent will be invited to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the absence and to look at ways of improving attendance.

If there is not sufficient improvement in attendance due to sickness absence, then the school will seek guidance from the local authority Education Welfare Service before meeting with the parent/care for a second time.

The family are expected to fully cooperate with the schools efforts to support children to attend school as fully as possible.

### **Doctor and Dentist Appointment**

Doctor and dentist appointments must be made outside of school hours wherever possible. Where urgent appointments are made during school time, parent/carers must inform the school office in advance and provide evidence of appointment **prior** to the absence.

Parents must also inform the school of the time they will be arriving to collect their child for the appointment. It is expected that the child will be absent only for the duration of the appointment plus reasonable travelling time and that they return to school after the appointment unless they are medically unable to do so.



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Please note that it is the school's decision as to whether absence due to doctor or dentist appointments are recorded as authorised or unauthorised. It is the parent/carer responsibility to make every effort to ensure that their child does not take any time off school unless it is absolutely necessary.

### Late Arrival and Early Departure to and from School

Parent/carers of children either arriving late for school and who are collected early from school will need to sign the child in or out in the appropriate register in the school office.

You are required to give a valid reason for the absence and to sign/initial the absence accordingly.

All such absence will be closely monitored and followed up by the school where persistent absence or patterns of absence are identified.

### Registration Procedures

	St Bede's Nursery	St Bede's	St. Bernadette
Gates open	8.55am	8.55am	8.30am
Gates close	9.00am	9.10am	9.00am
School bell sounds Pupils line up and go into school quietly	N/A	9.05am	8.55am
Pupil registration After this time pupils are late	9.05am	9.10am	9.00am
Close of registration After this time pupils are registered as unauthorised late	9.10am	9.15am	9.10am
Unauthorised absence	After 9.20am	After 9.25am	After 9.20am

If your child does not arrive for school at all and the school has not received any prior reason, the child will be marked as **unauthorised absent**. The school will contact the parent/care by after the close of registration to investigate the absence.

### Monitoring Lateness

Children who regularly arrive late for school are monitored for concerns over frequency or patterns of lateness.

**Regular lateness** is measured by a child accumulating 3 late arrivals in any one half term period. A letter will be issued to parents to inform them of their child's persistent lateness.

In the first instance, a member of staff responsible for Attendance will meet with the parent/carer of any child with regular lateness to discuss the reasons for the lateness absence. Achievable target for improvement will be agreed with the parent/care and monitored closely by the school for the following half term.

Failure for a pupil to achieve this target will result in a meeting with one of the Headteacher's who may seek advice from the Educational Welfare Officer if lateness persists.



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In the case of persistent unauthorised lateness, the parent will be required to meet with the Headteacher to be advised of the next steps which will involve a special meeting with the School Attendance Panel, who will meet with the parent/carer to discuss the matter and will agree the next action.

**Further failure to adhere to agreed targets of the School Attendance Panel may result in parent penalty notices or parent prosecution proceedings being initiated.**

### **Monitoring Attendance**

**If a child is absent for 10 days without contact from the parent/carer, or misses 10 consecutive days off school for any other unauthorised reason, the school will contact Lambeth's Education Welfare Officer and make a referral for Children Missing in Education and/or to alert the EWO that the child has not yet returned to school. The EWO will conduct investigations and your child will be taken off-roll if they fail to return to school within 20 consecutive days.**

**Stage 1** - Parents of children with below **95%** attendance will meet with the Attendance Leader to discuss the poor attendance and their attendance will be monitored over the subsequent 2 weeks.

**Stage 2** – If attendance does not improve then Letter 1 is sent and attendance is monitored for a further 4 weeks.

**Stage 3** – If attendance still fails to improve Letter 2 will be sent inviting them to meet with the Headteacher to set targets to significantly improve attendance.

**Stage 4** – If the targets are not met, parents/carers will be invited to an Attendance Panel Meeting in school with the Headteacher, Governors and the local authority Educational Welfare Officer.

**Stage 5** - If the child's attendance fails to rise to **95%** after the panel meeting, the School, supported by the Educational Welfare Service, will seek to issue a penalty charge notice fine to the parent/carer. Failure to comply with an issued fine may result in prosecution. Progress the case further you may be at risk of going to magistrate's court due to the unauthorised absence from school.

All letters regarding attendance meetings will be posted out to the parent's home addresses and in the pupil post via the school bag. Where possible the school always aims to hand the letter to the parent in person. In some instances the school may decide to issue important letters home via royal mail recorded delivery.

The school reserves the right to involve children's services in any event of absence from school if they feel that there is a possible safeguarding issue or have any concerns over a child's wellbeing, emotional or physical.

### **Attendance and Punctuality Meetings**

**At the first meeting the Headteacher/Attendance Leader will discuss the following:**

- Enquire as to reasons for absence or persistent late attendance
- Identify any areas of need and offer at least one measure of support
- Implement enhanced monitoring and targeted intervention for pupil



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- Remind parent of the school's policy and expectations
- Set achievable and reasonable targets (pupil/parent)
- Utilise incentives and rewards

### **At the second meeting the Headteacher will discuss the following:**

- Enquire as to why the previously set targets have not been met
- Pupils' statistics and attainment information
- The link between good attendance/punctuality and achievement to be made clear
- Identify any areas of need and offer at least one measure of support
- The school's attendance/punctuality policy will be referred to, in order to remind parents/carers of the school's and the LA's expectations
- A home school agreement/contract made to include achievable and reasonable targets over a prescribed period of time.
- Formal notification of the next stages in the school's procedures
- Refer to Lambeth EWO Service if there is no improvement

### **At the school attendance panel meeting the following will be included:**

- Analysis of the pupil's stats re: attainment, attendance and punctuality
- Review of case and progress/engagement so far
- Panel to make a decision as to the next course of action
- Home/School contract be utilised

## **Religious Observance**

If you require time off school for your child to attend a family religious observance you must complete a **Special Leave Form** beforehand for the school to consider.

The school will only authorise absence that is due to a religious observance which must be:

- Exclusively set apart for religious observance
- Set apart by the parents' religious body (not the parents)

Absence for religious observance may apply to a specific ceremony and not necessarily a whole day, so please only request the time off that you feel is needed.

## **Special Leave Request**

**HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME WILL NOT BE AUTHORISED and Special Leave will not be granted retrospectively.**

*(Please see appendix 1 for further details about taking a holiday in term time).*

If a parent wishes to apply for a leave of absence from school for emergency or **exceptional circumstances**, they must complete a Special Leave Form which is available from the front office.

This must be requested as early as possible (**and at least 10 days in advance**) and handed into the office.



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The Headteacher will consider this request in line with the child's current attendance any they will invite you in to discuss the details of your request.

Parents will receive notification from the Headteacher informing them as to whether the special leave has been authorised or not.

In the event that the special leave is not granted and the child is taken out of school or time off is taken without prior permission from the school, this will result in the absence being referred to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer, which could lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent/carer. **(Please see appendix 1 for further details about the Penalty Charge Notice fine)**

Your child is expected to return to school immediately after any period of Special Leave which may have been granted.

If your child fails to return to school after the agreed period of Special Leave and there has been no contact from the parent/carer, they will be marked unauthorised absent and the procedure outlined in **Unexplained Absence** will apply.

A special leave request for a period longer than one week is seen as exceptional and will be raised with the Governing Board.

The Headteacher is the only member of staff who can authorise a Special Leave request

### **Signed**

Attendance Officer \_\_\_\_\_

Headteacher \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Governors \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 1

### Legislation

#### **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006**

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These amendments, as described below, will come into force on 1 September 2013.

#### **Term-time holiday**

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 **head teachers may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head teachers 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.

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.** This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

#### **Children at Risk of Missing Education**

All schools (including academies) must inform their local authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education (see below on home educated children);
- Have **ceased to attend school** and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
- Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
- Have been permanently excluded.