



*Achieve, Believe, Care*

**ST BERNADETTE'S  
CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE  
POLICY**

This policy will be reviewed biennially

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## **1. Statement of Intent**

In formulating and applying this policy, the *Governing Body* and Staff of our school seek to promote and implement in relevant ways the aims and intentions of the Mission Statement "Achieve, Believe, Care" that has been agreed by the whole school community.

**St Bernadette's believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Students cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.**

We are  
committed to:

- Following the framework set in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which states that:

*'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*

*(a) to age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have*

*Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.*

- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies within the Equality Act 2010
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our students.
- Rewarding regular attendance.

Signed by

Chair of Governors. February 2019 Review date February 2021

## **2. Key roles and responsibilities**

2.1. The Governing Body has overall responsibility for ensuring that the attendance policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including but not limited to ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

2.2. The Governing Body has responsibility for handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school complaints policy.

2.3. The Headteacher will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management

of the attendance policy and procedures of St Bernadette's School

2.4. The Headteacher and Office Manager will be responsible for day to day monitoring of attendance, first day contact, recording reasons for absence and liaison with parents.

2.5. The Headteacher can provide information and advice to parents on matters of attendance

2.6. Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for following the attendance policy and for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently.

2.7. Teachers are responsible for accurately taking registers and are accountable to the Headteacher for this.

2.8. Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for modelling good attendance behaviour and implementing the agreed policy.

2.9. Parents and carers are legally responsible to ensure regular attendance of their child at school.

2.10. Parents and carers will be expected to promote good attendance behaviour and ensure that students attend school every day and on time.

2.12. The school is legally responsible to take an attendance register twice a day which shows whether a student is present or absent. Every half day is an attendance session and will be classed as either authorised or unauthorised. (see section 3.4) .

2.13. Only the school can either authorise or unauthorise an absence.

2.14. The school has to regularly inform the Local Authority of any compulsory school age students who are regularly absent from school, have irregular attendance, or have missed 10 school days or more without the school's permission.

2.15. The school has a safeguarding duty, under section 175 of The Education Act 1996 to investigate any unexplained absences.

### **3.**

## **Definitions**

3.1. St Bernadette's considers 'regular attendance' to be attendance over 95.5% and has a school target for attendance of at least 96%.

3.2. St Bernadette's defines "absence" as either:

3.2.1. Arrival at school after the register has closed. 3.2.2. Not attending the school for any reason.

3.3. St Bernadette's defines an "authorised absence" as, "mornings or afternoons away from school for illness, supported by medical evidence or other unavoidable causes such as:

3.3.1. Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the School has granted leave.

3.3.2. Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.

3.3.3. An absence due to a family emergency, for which the school has granted leave.

3.4. St Bernadettes' defines an "unauthorised absence" as an occasion when students are away for a reason that is not considered to be reasonable and for which no leave has been granted. Such absences are an offence by the parent /carer and can include:

3.4.1. Parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily or without good reason that can be evidenced

3.4.2. Truancy during the school day

3.4.3. Absences which have never been properly explained or evidenced.

3.4.4. Arrival after the register has closed.

3.4.5. Contact is not made to school by parent or carer

3.4.6. Holidays during term time.

3.5. St Bernadette's defines "persistent absenteeism (PA)" as:

Missing 10 per cent (10%) or more of schooling across the year for whatever reason.

3.8. If a registered pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly the parent could be guilty of an offence under s444 Education Act 1996. The Supreme Court has held in April 2017 that attending school "regularly" means attendance in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not "sufficiently frequent attendance". This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so and failure to do this may lead to the commission of an offence.

There are two offences:

1. **Section 444(1) Education Act 1996** - If the child is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e. all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1000.

2. **Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996** - an aggravated offence. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act then the parent is guilty of an offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2500 and a prison sentence of up to 3 months.

## **4. Expectations of parents and carers**

4.1. Parents/carers will be expected to ensure their child attends St Bernadette's regularly and on time and will sign the home/school agreement when their child starts school to confirm that they agree to this.

4.2. Parents/carers must provide accurate and up to date contact details.

4.3. Parents/carers are responsible for updating the school if their details or circumstances change.

## **5. Absence procedures**

5.1. The school is legally required to take an attendance register twice a day, morning and afternoon.

5.2. Parents/carers must contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence and every subsequent day of absence updating the school on their child's condition and expected date of return. They are asked to telephone the absence line on 01902 894787 , option 1 (24hrs), ideally before 8.30 a.m. with reason for absence.

5.3. A daily phone call and/or a text message is sent to the parent/carer if they have not reported their child's absence.

5.4. If contact cannot be made with parent/carer a home visit may be carried out and other agencies informed where necessary.

5.5. In the case of regular absence or continued absence, medical evidence for proof of illness may be requested. Arrangements will be made for parents/carers to meet with the headteacher and an attendance support plan may be initiated. In addition, an Early Help Assessment will be offered, which

can provide additional support that may be necessary to ensure the regular attendance of your child at the school.

5.6. In this context, if student attendance drops below 90% and absence has been unauthorised, the headteacher will refer to Staffordshire Council Education Welfare Service. This service will then investigate whether an offence has been committed under section 444(1) (1A) of the Education Act 1996 for 'failing to ensure regular attendance'

5.7. If a student has missed ten consecutive school days without permission from the school a referral is made to the local authority before or on the tenth day for a 'Child Missing in Education' enquiry. A pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the student is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

## 6. Term time leave of Absence

6.1. At St Bernadette's, our aim is to prepare students for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents/carers to observe the school holidays as prescribed.

6.2. As stated in the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, 'Leave of absence during term time, can now only be authorised by the Principal if they are satisfied, that there are exceptional circumstances that warrant the granting of leave when the students should be being educated.' (*\*see list below*)

6.3. Parents/carers must inform the school at least one week in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

6.4. Parents/carers must inform the school in writing at least two weeks in advance for leave of absence requests.

6.5. Any requests for leave will be considered on an individual basis.

6.6. If term time leave is not granted, the school will record **this** as an unauthorised absence and could result in a referral to the Local Authority who may issue a Penalty Notice. Current charge for the Penalty Notice is £60 per parent, per child, rising to £120 per parent, per child, if not paid within 28 days.

## **6.7. Exceptional circumstances**

6.7.1. When a family needs to spend time together because of an immediate family member's bereavement, crisis or serious illness

6.7.2. Funeral of immediate family member

6.7.3. Religious observance

6.7.4. Children of service personnel about to go on deployment (permission would be considered as long as the request is accompanied by a letter from the Commanding Officer)

6.7.5. Incarceration of parent (Prison Visits)

6.7.6. One day of absence may be authorised for a wedding of an immediate family member and the invitation has been provided as evidence

6.7.7. One off sporting events/performing arts competitions, if the child is participating and is at county standard or above and a letter has been provided from the performing arts/sports regional governing body as evidence

6.7.8. One day of absence may be authorised for an immediate family member's graduation ceremony/passing out parade

6.7.9. Leave of Absence for children of Armed Forces Personnel (See 6.7.4)

## **6.8. Leave of absence in term time will not be authorised for reasons such as the following:**

6.8.1. To care for other family members

6.8.2. Birthdays

6.8.3. To interpret for other family members

6.8.4. No school uniform/shoes

6.8.5. Bullying/Friendship problems

6.8.6. Head lice

6.8.8. Family holiday

6.8.9. Family anniversaries

6.8.10. Death of a pet

6.8.11. Travel problems

6.8.12. **School refusal**



6.8.13. Parent/carer not able to take leave outside of term time

6.9. Neither the '**Exceptional circumstances list**' nor the list of reasons where '**Absence / Leave of absence in term time will not be authorised**' are exhaustive and requests for leave will be considered on an individual basis by the Headteacher and governors.

## 7.

### Appointments

7.1. As far as possible, parents/carers should attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.

7.2. Where this is not possible, appointment cards or letters should be brought to school to enable authorisation of absence.

7.3. If the appointment requires the student to leave during the school day, they must be signed out by a parent/carer and signed back in on return.

7.4. Students must attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible. A whole day's absence for a medical appointment that occurs in the morning will not be authorised- the child would be expected to return to school in the afternoon, and vice versa.

## 8.

### Lateness

8.1. Punctuality is of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated. Students are allowed to enter the grounds from 8:40am.( Breakfast Club opens at 8am)

8.2. The school day starts at 8.50am. Students should be lined up at this time ready for morning prayers.

8.3. Registers are marked within 10 minutes at the start of every session

8.4. Students who arrive late will receive a late mark.

8.5. The school's a.m. registration closes at 9.15am. Students will receive a mark of absence if they fail to arrive before this time without a justified reason.

8.6. Unauthorised lateness after the school's registration has closed will receive a code 'U' to

indicate that the student is in school having arrived late, and will count as an absent mark.

8.8. Any parent bringing their child late to school is responsible to sign in at the office to enable their registration

## **9. Religious Observances**

9.1. St Bernadette's will take advice from Staffordshire Council and local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days required for religious festivals.

9.2. Parents/carers must inform the school at least one week in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

## **10. The Department for Education**

11.1. The Department for Education clearly states; Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated - pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

11.2. The government expects schools and local authorities to:

11.2.1. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;

11.2.2. Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and, 11.2.3. act early to address patterns of absence.

The government expects:

11.2.4. Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

11.2.5. All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

11.3. Legal background

11.3.1. The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)

11.3.2. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

11.3.3. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010 11.3.4.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 11.3.5. The  
Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Signed .....

January 2019