

St. Benedict's Primary School

Attendance Policy



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School Aims

St. Benedict's Primary School is a Rights Respecting School and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is at the heart of everything we do.

We believe that by understanding their own rights, children learn to respect and value the rights of others.

We aim for our children to be:

- * Successful Learners: who enjoy learning, making progress and achieve.
- * Responsible and Rights Respecting Citizens: who are self-assured and socially aware – who have pride in their own history and heritage and respect for that of others.
- * Confident Individuals: who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.

The following articles underline our Aims:

Article 3

"The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all our actions."

Article 29

"Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures and the environment."

Aims and Objectives

Parent / carers of registered pupils have a legal duty to make sure that pupils of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full time basis.

St. Benedict's Primary School is a Rights Respecting School and this Attendance Policy ensures that all parents, staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote Article 28 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Regular and punctual school attendance is crucial. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them at St. Benedict's Primary School.

Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will have missed approximately 19 days of learning. Children whose attendance does fall to 90% will be identified as 'Persistent Absentees' and further action will be taken.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school via our school website.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance
- We will maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:
- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, Governors, parents and pupils.

- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Fast Track to Attendance Programme, any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.

Registration

It is a legal requirement for every class teacher to take a register at the start of every morning and afternoon session. Accurate and consistent marking of the register is vital.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

School doors are open for children to arrive from 8.35am with the doors closing at 8.45 am. Nursery doors open at 8.30am

This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

All teachers should complete the register by 9.00am or 12.30 for the afternoon nursery session.

Lateness

Once the doors are closed at 8.45am the office will keep a record of who is late and will mark the child as late on the register. Any child who arrives for school later than 9:30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M). Medical evidence must be provided.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences onto the SIMS register. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Definition of authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Definition of an unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

It is the duty of the school to decide whether an absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. An explanation does not authorise an absence. Only the school accepting the explanation offered authorises an absence.

The following are examples of authorised absences:

- Unavoidable medical and dental appointments
- Religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement
- Educational visits
- Transition days to alternative schools
- When permission for absence has been granted by the Head Teacher under emergency leave.

The following are examples of unauthorised absences:

- Truancy
- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Parent carers keeping pupils away from school unnecessarily
- Shopping, haircuts, baby sitting
- Not attending due to sick relatives
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to receive a mark after registers have closed, unless there has been a suitable telephone or written explanation from parent carer.

Medical appointments

We monitor the amount of lessons missed due to medical appointments carefully.

We acknowledge that hospital and specialist clinic appointments, including orthodontic and on-going dental treatment may require a pupil having time out of school. Our expectation is that the minimum amount of learning is lost. We will seek an explanation from students and parents where a whole day is

missed for this reason. Proof of unavoidable medical appointments in school time must be provided for the school.

Routine, non-urgent appointments must be made after 2.45pm and during the 12 week school holiday.

Illness

Students are likely to experience bouts of illness from time to time. Some students will be managing chronic or more serious medical conditions that impact on their attendance. We will support students in these circumstances to ensure they do not miss out on their education.

When a student is identified as having frequent absence for reasons of minor illness, a meeting will be arranged to discuss this with the school nurse and the Pastoral Assistant.

Home Education

Parents have a right to educate their children other than at school. If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from school to pursue this option, this decision must be put in writing to the Headteacher. The school will then complete a form with the students' details and send to the Local Authority.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

Roles and Responsibilities

The 1944 Education Act placed a duty of care on those with parental responsibility to ensure that their child attends school every day that it is open and that they arrive in school on time.

The Governing Board has a named Governor who will assist the school in promoting good attendance to maximise learning for all of our children.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for attendance and monitors attendance across the school on a regular basis.

St. Benedict's has a Pastoral Assistant who is the first point of contact for all attendance matters.

Where a child is absent from school we expect a parent to contact the school by phone call or in person by 9.15am. When we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. The Pastoral Assistant will check all of the registers on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent.

Parents are required to provide proof for their child's absence in the form of a doctor's appointment card, prescription or prescribed medication.

Children whose attendance continues to be at or below 90% despite attending an attendance meeting will be referred to the Pastoral Assistant and/or the Assistant Head teacher. They will draw up attendance improvement plans and will work alongside families to help support them in improving their child's attendance.

Parents of children exhibiting patterns of absence or those that drop below 90% for a term will automatically be put on the 'Fast Track to Attendance Project'.

At St. Benedict's, we understand that poor school attendance can be an indicator of an emerging pastoral or safeguarding concern. If necessary, families may be referred to our Assistant Headteacher who has responsibility for Pastoral Support, including Safeguarding. An Early Help 'Three Houses Assessment' is completed with all persistently absent children.

Where an Early Help need is not identified, parents are invited to a School Attendance Review Meeting (SARM). If attendance does not improve, a formal warning notice will be sent to both parents individually with an up to date attendance print out. A referral will then be made to the Education Legal Team.

Children Missing from Education

If a child is absent from school and their whereabouts is unknown, we have a duty to carry out a reasonable enquiry jointly with the local authority to ascertain the whereabouts, which might be a result of:-

- The family moving within the city but the parents fail to inform the school of the house move or transfer to a new school.
- The family move out of the city and relocate to a new area within the UK but parents fail to inform the school.
- The family relocate abroad and fail to inform the school of their destination.
- The family is displaced as a result of 'crisis' e.g. domestic violence, homelessness.
- Parent/school disagreement and parents withdraw the child from school.
- Family separation.

In these instances, we will ensure the following actions are taken and recorded:

- Call the CME Team to conduct 'background checks' on the family
- Consider the likely reason for the absence – has the family been granted leave of absence or is the school aware of an extended trip abroad; has the child been absent due to sickness or unavoidable cause? If not:
- Make a first day of absence call to the parents to establish the reason for the absence and to confirm the child's whereabouts.
- Check with all members of staff who the child may have had contact with.
- Check with the child's friends, siblings and known relatives at this school or other schools.
- Make enquiries with other professionals who have been involved with the child.
- Make telephone calls to any numbers held or identified.
- Conduct a visit to the last known address of the child within the first five days of the child's absence.
- Send a letter to the last known address and record the outcome.
- Refer the child to the 'CME' team within the first five days of the child's absence and complete the 'Missing Pupil' referral form.

Leave in term time

If a parent feels there are exceptional circumstances that support a request for leave of absence in term time, they must put the request in writing to the Headteacher.

Each case will be considered individually and the decision communicated to the parents. Governors have adopted a zero tolerance to absence in term time for holidays and agreed that where parents ignore the policy.

Where a child has five continuous school days of G codes and five other days of further unauthorised absence or at least ten days of G codes this will be referred to the Local Authority for the issuing of a Penalty Notice (fine).

Collection of children at the end of the school day

At St Benedict's Primary School, all children must be collected by a responsible adult over the age of 16.

Any arrangements for children to be collected by anyone under the age of 16 must be made prior in writing to the Head Teacher. Class teachers will only hand children over to an adult who is known to them.

If arrangements for a child's collection from school change, parents must inform school by telephone of these alternative plans so that the Class Teacher and child can be informed. If a child is to be collected by someone other than those named on the contact forms then they will need to know the child's date of birth.

Our school day finishes at 2:45 pm. If a child is still awaiting collection at 2.55 pm then the Class Teacher or Teaching Assistant will take them to the school office. If a child still has not been collected by 3.00pm then the school office will attempt to contact parents to arrange for their child's collection. Parents of children who are regularly collected late will be contacted by the Head Teacher to discuss this situation. Referral may also be made to Children's Services as appropriate.

For children whose parents cannot be contacted, or who refuse to come immediately, St Benedict's Primary School will follow the Local Authority guidance in these matters.

These are as follows.

The school will continue to attempt to contact parents/carers until 15.30pm. If contact cannot be made or parents /carers refuse to collect their child by this time Children's Services will be contacted.

If the child has still not been collected by 3.45pm then arrangements will be made for Children's Services to take the child to a "Place of Safety".