



ATTENDANCE POLICY

MISSION STATEMENT

Christ is our teacher.

At St Bernard's we believe that all persons are created by God, unique and equal. We strive to create a caring Christian community in which we provide education based on Gospel values where all people reach their full potential. We aim to develop positive relationships with every individual and family, the parishes and the wider community.

"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full"

John 10:10

Reviewed by:	M Diskin (Vice Principal for Inclusion), June 2024
Reviewed by:	K Crawford (Acting Principal), June 2024
Approved by:	Austin Senior, Chair of Governors, 11 th July 2024
Signed:	Austin Senior, Chair of Governors

Introduction

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- To promote Gospel values
- To build a caring community
- To enable all students to achieve their maximum potential
- To keep students safe

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board 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 Principal to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school

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- 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

3.3 The Vice Principal responsible for attendance

The Vice Principal 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

The Vice Principal responsible for attendance is Michelle Diskin and can be contacted via 01709 828 183 or mdiskin@sbch.org.uk

3.4 The attendance and family liaison officer

The school attendance and family liaison officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Vice Principal responsible for attendance and the Principal
- Working with Early Help to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance and family liaison officer is officer is Rachel Graham and can be contacted via 01709 828183 or rgraham@sbch.org.uk

3.5 Class teachers/form tutors

Class teachers and form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes on Go 4 Schools.

3.6 School administration staff

School administration staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Family Liaison and Attendance Officer, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 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 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

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- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Arrange holidays out of school time
- Wherever possible, to make appointments outside of school hours and where this is not possible, ensure that their child attends school before and/or after the appointment so that they are not absent from school for a whole day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.40am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session for years 7, 8 and 9 will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1.30pm. The register for the second session for years 10 and 11 will be taken at 12.30pm and will be kept open until 1pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carers must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practically possible by calling the school.

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We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness or if the child has a current attendance of less than 90%.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents can inform school in advance via telephone or email.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed the pupil will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.
- Punctuality will be monitored over a 2 week cycle.
- A student who has 5 or more late marks in that time (both to school and lessons) will receive a letter home- informing parents/carers of this and the number of lates. If a student's punctuality does not improve, the parent/carer will be invited in for a meeting and the student will be put on a Punctuality Plan.
- This Punctuality Plan Meeting will look at the reasons for a student being late regularly.
- The parent/carer, student and school will then agree to the steps discussed to ensure punctuality and sign the agreed Punctuality Plan.
- If, following this, there is no improvement, the school can implement agreed sanctions.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school will conduct a home visit on day 3.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

All parents/carers will receive an update about their child's attendance once a term. In addition to this, parents/carers of children who have an attendance of less than 90% will be contacted more regularly via letter and phone by the school attendance and liaison officer.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via school reception.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

We reward attendance through phone-calls to parents/carers, end of year vouchers and certificates. We also provide a Dominoes Pizza lunch for the forms with the best attendance.

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data daily, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to form tutors, heads of year, governors and school leaders in order to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who have persistent absences
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum, yearly, by Michelle Diskin, Vice Principal. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Chair of Governors.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Positive Discipline policy

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Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

DfE ATTENDANCE CODES EFFECTIVE FROM 19TH AUGUST 2024

Code	Meaning	New Code
Code / \:	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session	
Code L:	Late arrival before the register is closed	
Code K:	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Yes
Code V:	Attending an educational visit or trip	
Code P:	Participating in a sporting activity	
Code B:	Attending any other approved educational activity	
Code D:	Code D: Dual registered at another school	
Code C1:	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	Yes
Code M:	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment	
Code J1:	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Yes
Code S:	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination	
Code X:	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school	
Code C2:	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable	Yes
Code C:	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance	
Code T:	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	
Code R:	Religious observance	
Code I:	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	
Code E:	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	
Code Q:	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	Yes
Code Y1:	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Yes
Code Y2:	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Yes
Code Y3:	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Yes
Code Y4:	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	Yes
Code Y5:	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	Yes
Code Y6:	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Yes
Code Y7:	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	Yes
Code G:	Holiday not granted by the school	
Code N:	Reason for absence not yet established	
Code O:	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	
Code U:	Arrived in school after registration closed	
Code Z:	Prospective pupil not on admission register	
Code #:	Planned whole school closure	

Appendix 2: Code of Conduct on the Issue of Fixed Penalty Notices

Appendix 3: School Attendance Matters Pathways