



St Catherine Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Attendance Policy

Date Ratified by Governors: April 2023

Signed:

Name:

Date for Review: April 2024



St Catherine Catholic Primary and Nursery School Attendance Policy

Regular attendance at school promotes pupils' well-being and gives them the best chance of learning and reaching their potential. Pupils should attend school every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Good attendance is important because pupils:

- get on better with learning and other children;
- cope better with school routines, work and friendships;
- find learning easier because they do not miss out;
- are more successful moving between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training;
- are known to be safe and well by us.

Research shows a direct link between high attendance and doing well at school.

All children have the right to an education. We encourage and expect 100% attendance for all pupils.

We will:

- tell pupils and parents the importance of being at school;
- check that pupils are at school every day;
- follow up and check the absence of persistent non-attenders;
- aim for an attendance rate of at least 97%. Pupils who are under school age, in Nursery or Reception, are treated in the same way as all other children.

Parents:

- by law, must ensure that their child attends school;
- should arrange dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school holidays, whenever possible;

- make sure that their child arrives on time between 8.20am and 8:30am. If they arrive after the allocated time, sign-in at the school office;
- should contact the school on the first day their child is away from school.

Pupils should arrive and be collected from school on time:

- registration is at 8:30am Pupils go straight to their classroom when they enter the school during 'soft-start' which is between 8.20 and 8.30 am until the registration time;
- late arrival can cause children to feel anxious or upset;
- if a child is collected late, after 3.15pm. There will be a charge for this childcare;
- we take the view there are no late children, only late parents;
- we contact parents of pupils who have patterns of lateness to talk about how to arrive and/or be collected on time.

Absence during term-time

Parents should:

- call the school on the first morning of all absences before 9.15am on 01895 442839 telling us the reason for being away;
- send in a note - by hand or email – telling us the reason for being away when they return to school;
- keep in touch by telephone, letter or email, if a child is away from school for a longer period;
- tell us about any planned absences in advance. Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance. Complete the leave of absence form (below).

Every half-day absence must be labelled by the school as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised':

Authorised absence

An absence is authorised when parents tell us an allowable reason for being away from school. Allowable reasons include:

- o being too unwell to come to school;
- o emergency medical or dental appointments;
- o religious events, when one day each year will be authorised;
- o visits to another school, tests or exams;
- o any other 'exceptional circumstances', explained below.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is unauthorised when a child is away from school for reasons that are not allowed. By law, unauthorised absences are an offence and can be liable to legal action or a fixed penalty fine. Unauthorised reasons include:

- o parents keeping children off school unnecessarily,
- o absences that have not been properly explained,
- o travel during term-time, including family holidays, that have not been agreed,
- o repeated or persistent non-specific illness, for example, 'poorly/unwell',
- o absence of other siblings if one child is ill,
- o absence because a parent is ill,
- o oversleeping,
- o inadequate clothing/uniform,
- o confusion over school term and holiday dates,
- o medical and/or dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason,
- o child's and/or family birthdays,
- o any routine family event or trip, for example, shopping.
- o where the reason for absence is given as illness and occurs either side of a school holiday, medical proof will be sought. Without this proof the absence will not be authorised.

The school may instruct the Local Authority to issue a Fixed-Penalty notice for any unauthorised travel during term-time.

The registration system

The School will use SIMs for keeping the school attendance records which the Admin officer reads using OMR (Optical Mark Reader).

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
X	Non compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances

Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years.

Computer registers must be printed out at least once a month and bound into annual volumes.

The law

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children are properly educated. When your child is registered at a school, parents, carers or guardians must ensure the regular and full-time attendance of their child. The Local Authority has the power to issue Fixed-Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absences. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent and for each child. The Penalty is £120 payable within 28 days, reducing to £60 if paid within 21 days. (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2004). If holiday absence is repeated, matters can increase and fines can be increased to both parents.

For term-time pupil absences, the Education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed all references to 'family holidays' and 'extended leave' as well as the 'notional threshold of 10 school days' authorised absence.

The 2013 amendments made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. The regulations also state that head teachers should determine the number of school days a pupil can be away from school if leave is given for 'exceptional circumstances'.

Exceptional circumstances

This information seeks to help clarify the meaning of 'exceptional circumstances' and outline some guiding principles to aid the head teacher's decision-making process while giving parents a consistent and fair approach to requests for any term-time absence.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'.

Guiding principles

1. Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The head teacher will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy is that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
2. The decision to authorise a pupil's absence is at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment and merits of each request.
3. If an event can be reasonably scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence for such an event, for example:

1.
 - a. holidays or other travel, including as a result of parental work commitments, are therefore not considered 'exceptional circumstances';
 - b. leave which is taken because of the availability of cheaper fares or other costs are not regarded as exceptional circumstances;
 - c. claims of illness as a reason for a delayed return, particularly after normal school holidays will not be considered unless accompanied by travel tickets dated before the school opens or other agreed dates. Medical documentation from abroad will not normally be accepted unless accompanied by travel documents indicating travel dates prior to school reopening.
2. Absences to visit seriously-ill relatives or for a bereavement of a close family member are usually considered to amount to 'exceptional circumstances', but for the funeral service and travelling time only, not for extended leave. Absence will only be authorised if the head teacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
3. Absences to attend parents' own wedding may be exceptional if the head teacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations the head teacher may use his discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.
4. Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account, but only for the ceremony and travelling time, again, not for extended leave. This is intended for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
5. The needs of the families of service personnel will be taken into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
6. Reasonable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities will be made and may result in a leave being granted as an exceptional circumstance.
7. Families may need time together to recover from a trauma or crisis, including where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.

When making absence-related decisions, the head teacher will consider:

- a. a pupil's record of attendance for the current and previous academic years;
- b. time of absence being taken in the school year. If the request is made to extend the beginning or end of a school holiday period, it is unlikely to be considered exceptional.

The head teacher can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether a particular absence is authorised.

The following factors may also help the head teacher to reach a decision:

- number of school days being missed;
- any exceptional term-time leave requested and/or taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose;
- whether alternative care arrangements been considered by the parent to limit the time away from school;
- impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family, for example, family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN;
- the potential impact that the absence will have on the child;
- whether the absence falls within any key stage national tests or exams.

How to tell us about exceptional circumstances:

- A parent should complete an application form for term-time leave in good time. The parent with whom the pupil normally resides must make the application.
- Leave may only be granted where proper procedures have been followed and the permission given.
- Tickets and/or other travel arrangements should not be booked prior to discussion with and agreement of the school.
- Parents should not confuse telling the school with having permission.
- Where the school and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is then absent from school the absence will be marked as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences are an offence and can be liable to legal action or a fixed penalty fine.
- Extended absences may put your child's school place at risk.
- In the event of an emergency when you have to take leave urgently, taking children, then you should inform the school or have the school informed immediately. Leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively and evidence other than your word may be asked for.

Action for low attendance

Not coming to school is a serious concern. However, each case is different and the school knows that there is no standard response. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to use.

- In every case, early intervention is needed to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.
- Prior to the engagement of Hillingdon Participation team, The school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupil's absence. It may also set up a parent meeting to discuss the pupil's absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for The Hillingdon Participation Team.

Attendance levels

Attendance levels show our expectations and what happens next:

- 97%+, expected attendance. This will help all aspects of a child's achievement and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
- 97-91%, below expected attendance. As attendance falls, our concern increases. We follow our stepped approach to take action.
- 90% or lower, persistent absence. Absence is causing serious concern. It is highly likely to affect attainment and progress and is disruptive to the child's learning. Meetings between home and school to share strategies for improvement will be called. If improvement is not achieved a referral is made to the Hillingdon Council Participation Team. A Fixed Penalty Notice will be considered where absence is not authorised.

For all children, we have a stepped approach to taking action. It will not always be appropriate to progress through all of these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed.

- staff will use discretion and consider each case carefully;
- where there has been no contact from parents, we will initiate first day calling for all pupils;
- for pupils with attendance below 90% there will be a discussion with the Hillingdon Participation Team at our regular half termly meeting;
- we will monitor trends in pupil attendance and punctuality, including our vulnerable groups;
- we will request for parent/carer to meet school staff;
- if appropriate, will initiate procedures to access support from other agencies.

The Hillingdon Participation Team actions may include:

- home visits,
- multi agency meetings,
- issuing a parenting contract,
- sign posting to supportive agencies,
- issue a Fixed Penalty Notice,

- court action for poor attendance.

Leavers and Children Missing in Education

The school has a responsibility to safeguard pupils from harm. This includes knowing and taking reasonable steps to check the destinations of leavers. If your child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6, parents should:

- give the school full information about their plans including
 - date of move,
 - name of new school,
 - new home address,
 - the start date at the new school if known,
 - and reasons for moving (a form is available at the school office),
- confirm the school has your current mobile phone number,
- let us know when you move.

When pupils leave and parents have not given us the above information, and we cannot contact the parent, then a child is considered to be a Child Missing Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations to try to track and locate the child. Telling us leaving details saves unnecessary investigations.

Rewards for positive attendance

The main benefit of regular attendance is continuity and progression in learning. We promote positive attendance through:

- Individual children, certificates are awarded at the end of each school year for 100% attendance. This is celebrated in the final whole school assembly.
- Weekly award issued for the class with the highest attendance, also published in our newsletter.
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Monitoring

Summary attendance information is reported to governors at least termly by the Head teacher.

Attendance Monitoring Procedures

St Catherine Catholic school and Nursery has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

Teachers will:

- Look at weekly attendance figures given from attendance officer.
- Phone parents of children who are absent and have an attendance below **97%**. (Look at the spreadsheet detailing reasons for absence before phoning).
- Discuss the reason the child is absent with the parent when appropriate.
- Express the concern that the child has already had significant time off school.
- Encourage parents to send pupil back to school as soon as they can. Pupils may be able to attend in the afternoon session e.g. if 48 hours after vomiting finished at 12 pm then child will be able to attend the afternoon session.
- Log the call on CPOMS.
If teachers are unable to make the call e.g., they are attending a school trip then they must ask the attendance officer to complete these steps.

The attendance Officer will

- Alert class teacher and SLT if any punctuality/ attendance trends are noticed.
- Alert headteacher if a child's absence is unauthorised.
- Make a note in the attendance diary of any absent children, record parental contact e.g., phone call or email. The diary will have the date, the child's first and surname, the reason for absence, the number of days absent e.g., number 1 if this is the first day. This diary will be kept locked away.
- Ensure above information is put on an excel spreadsheet and shared with all teaching staff.
- Encourage parents to send pupil back to school as soon as they can. Pupils may be able to attend in the afternoon session e.g., if 48 hours after vomiting finished at 12 pm then child will be able to attend the afternoon session.
- Ensure Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided; these N codes are reported to the headteacher or in their absence the SLT daily.
- Make sure contact is made to the parents of any pupils marked using the N code. Any N codes not established after a week are recorded as an unauthorised absence.

- If no contact is made then a home visit must be conducted on the third day of absence by the attendance officer and member of SLT if available.
- Each half term, If a pupil's attendance falls below 97 % a letter is sent home raising concerns that their attendance has fallen below the school's expected standard.
- If a pupil's attendance falls below 92 % a letter is sent home explaining that the pupil's attendance is now being monitored, and the parents are asked to make an appointment to speak to the attendance officer or SLT (not head teacher)
- If a pupil's attendance falls below 90% a letter is sent home explaining that this level of attendance is considered persistently absent, and the parents are asked to make an appointment to speak to the head teacher.
- Check that teachers have logged any issues on CPOMS
- A weekly report will be sent on a Friday afternoon to the SLT with a list of pupils whose attendance is below 97% and 90% and pupils in these groups that were absent that week. Any records of pupils who are late, the average overall attendance that week and the average overall attendance that year to date.

SLT

- Look at attendance report (excel document) during weekly/ fortnightly SLT meeting.
- Report will be sent on a Friday afternoon to the SLT with a list of pupils whose attendance is below 90% and 97% and any pupils in these groups that were absent that week. Any records of pupils who are late, the average overall attendance that week and the average attendance that year to date.
- The head teacher will meet half termly with parents whose attendance falls below 90%.
- Discuss Pupil attendance plans for pupils who continue to fall below 90% after initial meeting.
- Discuss rewards for pupils with good attendance/ who meet attendance targets in following pupil attendance plan.
- Discuss with the attendance officer, any referrals that meet the participation criteria.

- [HealthGuidance.pdf](#)
- [Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance.pdf](#)