

ST WILFRID'S CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL



St. Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School Attendance Policy

Policy review dates:

Review Date	Changes made	By whom	Date Shared
September 2026 Next review Sep 2028	Changes made in-line with DfE guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'	Charlotte Chapman Stephen Anderson Ratification LGC Feb26	Feb 26

Named personnel with designated responsibility for Attendance:

Mrs Franklin

Our school target is 97% attendance.

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website or available from reception for those without access to the internet.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Executive Head teacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. 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, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

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, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- 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.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Attendance and Welfare Officer and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.
- Recognise the role of class teachers as they will be able to identify where attendance is having an impact on attainment.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents understand 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 Attendance Service or appropriate agencies of any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the nominated person with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the nominated person where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.

- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be recorded appropriately.
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.

The Executive Head teacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the Attendance Service.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's LA Attendance Officer.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring children are signed in and Arbor is updated.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and / or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents / carers and reporting concerns to the Head teacher.
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.
- First Day Response: Contacting home if no reason for absence is received (In-App message and text with phone call with voice message left if required).

Head of School:

Office staff and senior leadership team work in close collaboration to offer additional support to parents / carers and pupils. This includes support in relation to:

- To identify with parents the reason for poor attendance and work with parents to achieve improved attendance and reduce exclusions.
- Monitor attendance levels & punctuality.
- Offer parent contracts and attendance plans.
- Identify patterns of absence.
- Talk to pupils on a 1:1 basis regarding attendance related matters.
- Refer to outside agencies for additional support for families including School Health, CYPS, Attendance Service, Police, Youth Offending Team & Social Care.

The Attendance and Welfare Officer:

The school attendance and welfare officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data.
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher.
- Working with relevant school staff to tackle persistent absence.
- Advising the Head when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

The attendance officer is Mrs Franklin and can be contacted via telephone 01670 352919 or email admin@stwilfridsblyth.uk.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending school every day on time.

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist (appointment card/letter).
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

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.

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.

Registers

Registers are legal documents and will be marked twice a day.

Parents must always give reasons for absence to the school.

- Schools are to determine whether absence is authorised or unauthorised in exceptional circumstances, considering factors such as frequency, duration, attendance patterns, i.e. within reason. Staff must be observant of situations where absence is continually condoned by parents.

The guidelines below clarify possible actions, they are not an exhaustive list.

Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
Illness	Absence without a valid reason
Medical Appointment / Dental (For the time of appointment including travelling)	Latecomers beyond 30 minutes after the session has started – 9.30am
Family Bereavement	Persistent lateness within the first 30 minutes of the day – 9.30am
Excluded Children	Special occasions, e.g. birthday
Elite sporting events only (e.g. national representation)	Family holidays
Agreed other educational activity at the discretion of the Head teacher	Non-elite sporting events e.g. dance exams or football tournaments for local club

Reintegrating Long Term Absentees

Following a long period of absence, a child may feel vulnerable, so staff may wish to arrange a phased or gradual return, allocation of a ‘Key Worker’, consider whether Special Needs support is appropriate, ensure that all staff are aware of the situation and nominate a key person to monitor the child’s reintegration into school. All children must feel welcomed back and know from whom they can seek help. Never leave children sitting in corridors or outside an office for long periods.

Registration

The school doors open at 8.45am for all pupils and are open until 8:50am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom. At 8:50, the school doors will be closed, and pupils need to be escorted to the main entrance by a parent or carer, where they will be recorded as being late.

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. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 8.55am and by 1.10pm.

All attendance records are documented using Arbor software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used. Parents can monitor their child’s attendance on Arbor.

Lateness

Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of 1996 Education Act. The school seeks to improve general punctuality and to improve attitude of persistent offenders by: -

- Informing parents of our expectations and offer ways of helping combat lateness.
- Parents of persistent offenders must be contacted, and reported to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if no improvement.
- Praise and acknowledge latecomers who improve.
- Ensure that staff set a good example by arriving punctually for lessons.
- All children and parents must understand that lateness is actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases.
- Schools may use other incentives to improve levels of punctuality.

Our Attendance and Welfare Officer or Northumberland County Council's Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be used to support pupils and families with any of the above issues.

School doors open at 8:40am (soft start) and close at 8:50am. Once the doors are closed at 8:50am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 8:50am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am for both KS1 and KS2 as well as EYFS 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 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

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 full and accurate details of the reason for their absence and expected date of return. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (attendance Code O).

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will attempt to contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card/letter or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries. Alternatively, we may make a referral to the School Health Advisor to offer support.

Term time absence for holidays

Any request for leave of absence due to holidays in term time will not be authorised.

The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure and recreational circumstances, and therefore there is no entitlement in law to time off in term time. Young people who are

absent from school fall behind in their learning. They miss out on school events. Many find it difficult to catch up. In addition, school staff have to divert their attention away from young people to support those who have fallen behind due to a holiday-related absence.

In the case of an unauthorised leave of absence, incurring 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 days) within 10 school weeks, consideration will be given if a referral should be made to the Local Authority for a fixed penalty notice to be issued or prosecution where repeated penalty notices have been issued. Where the threshold has not been met in the case of persistent avoidance, for example, repeated absence for birthdays or other family events, the school will have discretion to refer the case to the Local Authority. If in an individual case, the Local Authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met.

Legal Sanctions.

Where intervention by school and the Education Welfare Team fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, enforcement will be considered. A referral may be made to the Local Authority for enforcement action as appropriate. Parents do need to realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Enforcement action may include (but is not limited to):

(a) the issue of a Penalty Notice, (see below for further information relating to Penalty Notices) which would require payment of a sum of £80 (if paid within 21 days from receipt of the Notice), or £160 (if paid after 21 days and before 28 days from the date of receipt);

(b) prosecution in the Magistrates' Court for an offence under section 444 of the 1996 Act, for which the penalties on conviction are:

(i) a fine of up to £1,000 for an offence under section 444(1); or

(ii) a fine of up to £2,500 for an offence under section 444(1A) and/or a custodial sentence of up to 3 months;

(c) an application to the Magistrates' Court for a Parenting Order of up to 3 months should the Local Authority be successful in a prosecution under section 444;

(d) an application under section 36 of the Children Act 1989 for an Education Supervision Order to authorise the Council to take responsibility for advising, assisting and giving directions to you and the Child to secure that the Child is properly educated.

Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the 1996 Act.

Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

- Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice which would require payment of a sum of £80 (if paid within 21 days from receipt of the Notice), or £160 (if paid after 21 days and before 28 days from the date of receipt).

- A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child.

- If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court.

As stated above if prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, the penalties on conviction are:

(i) a fine of up to £1,000 for an offence under section 444(1); or

(ii) a fine of up to £2,500 for an offence under section 444(1A) and/or a custodial sentence of up to 3 months;

Penalty Notices will be issued in accordance with Northumberland County Council's Code of Conduct.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

Should a penalty notice be issued, it should be noted that this is a direct alternative to prosecution, non-payment of the penalty notice may lead to a prosecution under section 444 of the 1996 Act.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%. Our aspirational target is, as a school, is 97%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Head teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In our school parents are to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore when become concerned about attendance we will inform parents/carers of our concerns.

Initially, concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home, parents may be offered a parent contract. A parent contract is an agreement / action plan which looks at ways to work together to improve attendance. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Local Authority's Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will look at each case and may issue fixed penalty notices to parents where there is poor attendance.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) working jointly with Legal Services may also consider:

- Applying for a parenting order
- Applying for an education supervision order
- School Attendance Order (If parent has not registered their child in a school) ☐ Community Order

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) can remotely check and monitor attendance levels. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) regularly carries out register checks to identify children with low attendance.

Attendance monitoring

Our office staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on Arbor, our attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the attendance senior lead, attendance and welfare officer and school attendance team to discuss all attendance concerns. Appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data daily, weekly, half-termly, 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 levels 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.

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.

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to school leaders, 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.

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 regular meetings with the parents of pupils whom the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Support the family to improve attendance by agreeing to an attendance contract.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.
- Request medical evidence from parents/carers where pupil absences are related to medical reasons.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing committee.

Support

The school will:

- Build relationships with students and families to encourage regular school attendance.
- Analyse and use data and relationship knowledge to prevent regular absence.
- Using resources (School-based and external services) to intervene early with support.
- Use targeted support for persistent/severe absences.
- Offer formal or informal support to families with our Attendance and Welfare Officer on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

Rewards & Recognition

Although good attendance is an expectation the school seeks to improve whole school attendance by offering incentives, this may include:

- 100% attendance certificates
- Weekly attendance cup
- Weekly 'Attendanceopoly' competition, where pupils are offered incentives for class attendance above 95%.

- Top Table (pupils with 100% attendance that week are picked at random).

Links with other school policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Attitudes and emotional regulation policy

Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised with assistance from the Education Welfare Team. The following legislation and statutory guidance have also been considered:

- Working together to improve school attendance, DfE (August 2024)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Children missing education, DfE (August 2024)
- Keeping children safe in education, DfE (September 2025)
- Working together to safeguard children, DfE (December 2023)

National contacts

www.direct.gov.uk School attendance, absence and your child

www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport Behaviour and attendance - Parental responsibility

www.familylives.org.uk Truancy Helpline: 0808 800 2222

Local contacts

Northumberland County Council:

Call 'Education Welfare' on 01670 622800 or email educationwelfare@northumberland.gov.uk