

St Cuthbert's RC Primary

Attendance Policy

'Be yourself, but be it very well.'

The best interests of the child must be the top priority in all decisions and actions that affect the child.

(United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Rationale: St Cuthbert's RC Primary school seeks to ensure that every pupil receives an education which maximises the opportunities for all to reach their true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment where everyone in our school community feels valued.

Regular attendance at school is essential to getting the most out of the education our school provides. The aim of our Attendance Policy therefore, is to provide consistent practice which encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils.

The school has established systems for excellent attendance, and we acknowledge the effort of pupils and their families in striving for this. School will challenge pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been written in line with the DfE 'School attendance Departmental advice for maintained school, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (October 2014) and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015).

This policy is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

Attendance and Attainment:

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise a pupil's progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason, school is dedicated to ensuring our Attendance Policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All pupils have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative
- Pupils will not be deprived of their education opportunities by either their own absence or lateness, or that of other pupils
- Action is taken, where necessary, to secure an improvement in attendance

The Law:

Parents must ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time. Because parents are responsible for this duty in law, you will be breaking the law if you do not do this and there are no good reasons for missing school.

The school and the Local Authority wish to support any family experiencing attendance issues. If you need help with attendance, it is important that you talk to school about the issue as soon as possible. You may need to attend a meeting in school to talk about the problems and to put a plan in place. Occasionally, school may need to involve other agencies to help.

If attendance does not improve, or parents decline support offered, the Council may issue the parent with a warning notice, a Penalty Notice or ask you to attend an interview to ascertain as to whether the law has been broken.

Attendance Procedures:

- i. On the first day of absence, parents must phone the School Office, by 9.15am, giving the reason for their child's absence and an estimate of the length of absence. If the child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home, school will text the first contact number to enquire as to why the child is not in school. If there is no response to the text, school will telephone the first contact number until a response is received.
- ii. Doctors and dentist appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. **It will be necessary to produce an appointment card if this is the case.** If your child is taken from school, he or she must be signed out by the appropriate adult. If he or she is well enough to return to school after the appointment, they must do so.
- iii. If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days, parents are requested to notify the school with an update. School may ask for evidence if a medical person (doctor, nurse, pharmacist etc) has been consulted. If the school does not receive an appropriate reason for the absence, then an unauthorised absence will be recorded.
- iv. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action, such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action.

Communication: The school will always communicate with parents regarding their child's attendance if it declines; this may be by letter or a telephone call. Parents may be invited to attend a meeting in school to discuss the issue, depending on the circumstances. School will work with parents to discuss ways to offer support to improve the situation

Enforcement Action: If, following the school's attempts to intervene, there is no significant improvement and no good reason for absences (ie absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or if parents do not co-operate with school to improve the situation, the school will consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action.

The High Court has confirmed that the Head Teacher of a school authorises absences. If a child misses a lot of school time because of illness, or if the school is not aware of any serious health issue which would mean a child could miss a lot of school, then school will ask a parent to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

All challenges to persistent absences will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Attendance below 90% is deemed as persistent absenteeism.

Punctuality: School begins at 8.50am and 1.00pm. If a pupil is not on the yard by 8.50am and has to enter school through the main entrance and not the yard door, then the child's name will be entered onto the Late Register. If a child arrives at school between 9-10am without being accompanied by an adult or without a valid excuse, they will be recorded as L, which means 'late after the registers close', if a child arrives at school after 10am without a valid excuse, this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to a fixed penalty notice).

If a child is late for school on a number of occasions, a letter will be sent home expressing concerns and an expectation that punctuality improves. Punctuality will continue to be monitored.

If lateness becomes persistent, a letter will be sent home with an appointment with the Head Teacher to address issues and to agree a way forward to improve punctuality.

If school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality, then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

Leave of Absence in Term Time: Head Teachers are unable to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The Head Teacher will consider each request for leave of absence individually, taking into account circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance, the pupil's current and potential attainment, test periods in school time.

An application for leave of absence must be made a minimum of three weeks before the event on a form which is available via the website or from the School Office.

Where leave of absence is granted, the Head Teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head Teacher's discretion.

As stated in the most recent DfE guidance on attendance, **if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.**

Please note that absence will not be authorised during any assessment period (internal or external).

Please also note that school will not provide work if a parent chooses to take their child out of school during term time.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality: In order to promote good attendance, school gives out a weekly trophy for the class with the best attendance. Further to this, any child achieving 100% attendance over a term will receive a certificate during at a Celebration Assembly. Children who achieve 100% attendance for the whole year will receive a badge and certificate. Individual pupils' attendance will be recorded on their annual report.

Children Missing from Education: If a parent moves from the area and their whereabouts is unknown, the school can legally remove their child from the roll after 20 days of unauthorised absence. **It is vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details.** A child may be at risk of losing their school place if their whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date, and that if a parent is leaving the area, they provide details of where and how they can be contacted. If a parent does not do this, and the school is unable to trace their child, it would be treated as a safeguarding matter.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body: As part of the school approach to maintaining high levels of attendance, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents and staff
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow staff, parents and pupils to implement the policy effectively
- Ensure that regular meetings of the Curriculum and Standards Committee take place and that governors on that committee will take a lead role in monitoring attendance and co-ordinating provision and policies for attendance. Governors will review and discuss attendance targets and any issues which arise in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising the data, including for children who are educated off-site.

School Leadership Team: As part of the school approach to maintaining high levels of attendance, the Leadership Team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with pupils and parents
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high levels of attendance for their own progression and achievement
- Liaise with the Governing Body to monitor the implementation of this policy and its effectiveness
- Ensure that staff are up to date with the Attendance Policy
- Ensure that government legislation on attendance is compiled and that the Leadership Team are up to date with legislation changes and how to implement them

- The Head teacher takes responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision
- Report to the Governing Body each term on attendance records, data and provision
- Ensure that systems to record and report data are in place and working effectively.

Teachers and support staff: As part of our school approach to maintaining high levels of attendance, teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with pupils and their parents
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- Ensure that the Head Teacher is kept fully up to date with any concerns relating to pupils which may impact on their attendance
- Ensure compliance with regulations and guidance on attendance
- Work professionally with parents, carers, pupils and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures
- Ensure they understand, and are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is recorded at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session

Parents and Carers: As part of our school approach in maintain high levels of attendance, school expects parents and carers will:

- Engage in their child's education, to support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing in school
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular attendance
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary absence from school
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child
- Establish a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc so that their child is used to consistency and school becomes part of that routine. It is vital that children receive the same messages at home as they do in school about the importance of attendance.