

# **St Catherine's Catholic Primary School**

"Loving and Learning Together as Jesus taught us"



## **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

**Reviewed: October 2023**

**Next review: October 2025**

Policy Passed by the Governors

Responsible for Review: Headteacher & Attendance Officer (Pastoral Care Mentor)

## St Catherine's Mission Statement

Our Mission is:

*Loving and Learning together as Jesus taught us*

Our Vision is:

Our school will provide a loving, secure and stimulating learning environment, where everyone will grow in their faith journey and be inspired to be the best person they can be.

Our Aims are:

- To value and encourage the whole school community to develop their God given potential
- To nurture and support each child in their faith journey as a worshipping community
- To promote and encourage the individuality of all, respecting ethnicity, attainment, age gender, disability and background.
- To provide a learning environment and curriculum that is safe, stimulating, creative and challenging
- To create a partnership involving school, home and parish and the wider community
- To help each child develop a positive self-image with a healthy lifestyle to become confident individuals who will contribute to society
- To instil a lifelong love of learning

Our Values are:

Love: - we show compassion towards each other

Faith: - we place our confidence, belief and trust in God

Integrity: - we strive to be honest and truthful in what we say and do

Diversity: - we recognise that each individual is unique

Excellence: - we achieve our best in all that we do

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school; and
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

All absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a valid reason can be an offence in accordance to the law and may result in prosecution.

## **Rationale**

Regular attendance is paramount. Without it, the best efforts of teachers and school will be significantly impacted. Children need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of all the educational, social and emotional opportunities and experiences available to them. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and can lead to educational disadvantages and social difficulties. Under Section 35 of the Education Act 1944, a parent, an adult who has parental responsibility or an adult who has care of children of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that they receive efficient full-time education. Parents are responsible for supporting attendance and taking seriously any problems that may lead to non-attendance.

## **Aims**

- To demonstrate to pupils, parents and staff that the school values excellent attendance.
- To raise the educational achievement of all pupils in the school.
- To value the individual and be socially and educationally inclusive.
- To promote regular school attendance at whole school level, class level and individual child level.
- To be consistent in the implementation of rewards and sanctions to promote good attendance.
- To remind the pupils, staff, and parents that the aims for our schools' attendance are aspirational. We are proud of our 97%+ attendance figure and aim to work together to maintain this as a school community.

## **Promoting Regular Attendance and Punctuality**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is **everybody's responsibility** - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

## **To help us all to focus on this we will**

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters, positively recognising good and improving figures.
- Report to parents/carers annually on their child's attendance with the annual school report and linking this to academic progress where relevant.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance be of concern
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Promote positive reinforcement through posters, curriculum planning and assemblies, emphasising the school attendance motto **"Every Day Matters!"**
- Reward good or improving attendance and punctuality through the newsletter, certificates and weekly class trophies in assemblies and annual 100% attendance medals.

## **Absence Procedures**

It is the parent's/carer's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible. Parental contact on the first day of absence is essential to ensure that robust first response procedures can be undertaken, which fulfil the schools safeguarding responsibilities.

### **If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence by 8:50am.
- Parents/Carers can call the school office and leave a message on the answering machine or report a child's absence to the office in person by 8:50am.

A letter of explanation after an absence is required on the child's return. If an absence is unexplained the school will write to parents requesting an explanation by return. Absences will then be coded accordingly.

### **If your child is absent we will**

- Text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you as part of our first response procedure
- Invite you in to meet with the Pastoral Care Mentor if absences persist or there is an identified pattern of absences or a cause for concern
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance moves below 90% and the Pastoral Care Mentor feels that intervention, support or a multi-agency approach is needed.

## **Illnesses that will prevent your child from coming to school**

- Vomiting and diarrhoea (your child can return to school 48 hours after the last episode)
- High temperature with a diagnosed infection
- Hospital admission
- Dental surgery
- Medical emergency

## **Example illnesses that will not prevent your child from coming to school**

- Mild cough
- Cold/Sneezes
- Tiredness

### **COVID**

If a child has a **cough, temperature or has lost their sense of taste or smell** we ask parents to keep their child at home until they have received a negative PCR Test.

## **Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

**Authorised** absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a valid reason like illness, sudden bereavement, interview/exams at another school, urgent medical/ dental appointments (although we strongly encourage you to make these outside of school times), emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

**Unauthorised** absences are those which the school does not receive a reason or an explanation considered reasonable. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- oversleeping, tired
- Looking after brothers and sisters at home
- Non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- All siblings absent due to illness the day before a holiday or the day after a holiday

When explanations for absence are not satisfactory, or when absence persists, parents will be contacted by the school to discuss any difficulties that may prevent their child(ren) from attending. If the reasons for poor attendance are related to a child's special needs, social/emotional issues or anxiety, the Pastoral Care Mentor or a member of the SLT will liaise or refer to outside agencies to support the child and family. If ten percent of expected attendance is recorded as unauthorised absence, the Education Welfare Officer may act which will result in prosecution. Any absences (particularly when all siblings are absent) the day before and after a holiday break will be unauthorised and a FPN will be issued by Barnet Local Authority unless a doctor's certificate is provided for all individual children. Positive outcomes are more likely to be achieved with home and school working in partnership together, with the child's needs at the forefront of all interventions.

Please note that the decision to authorise absences rests with the **headteacher** and not parents.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA) /absences that are a cause for Concern**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling (90% and below) across the school year for whatever reason. Absences figures at or below 90% can create considerable gaps on a child's learning and we value parental support and co-operation to tackle this successfully. The Pastoral Care Mentor will monitor all absences and the reasons given thoroughly. The Educational Welfare Officer will also be informed and medical evidence may be requested. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully and this will be linked to academic progress tracking and interventions, throughout the academic year.

The Head and Pastoral Care Mentor should be informed by staff if they are concerned about a child's attendance, regular late arrivals/collections.

Notes, records of telephone calls, and medical letters received are to be kept in a secure cupboard by the Attendance Officer (Pastoral Care Mentor), as that such documents may be required in legal proceedings.

## End of the School Day

Children should always be clear about who is collecting them from school. All children should be collected from the playground at the end of the school day at 3.15 KS1 /3:20pm KS2 by parents/carers. Parents are asked to telephone the school if they are going to be late collecting their child so that the child doesn't get anxious or to inform school if another nominated adult will be collecting their child. A child will not be released to an adult without prior consent.

Nursery and Reception pupils are collected from their classrooms. All other children are escorted to the playground by their class teachers and line up in designated areas with the adult dismissing them.

Children not collected by 3.30pm are brought back into school and are signed in to after school club. Mrs Ward (The After-School Club Manager) will then endeavour to contact parents/carers, using the contact details available. Two contact numbers are required for each child in accordance with The Keeping Children Safe in Education document (2021). A charge for a session based on late collection will be added to the relevant Parent Pay account. Children must be signed out, before they leave.

## Independent Travellers

If children are independent travellers' parents should complete an independent traveller form at the start of **each** academic year and keep the school updated of any changes. Pupils, who are independent travellers, are prioritised in our first response procedure. Parents of independent travellers, whose children are not attending school (due to illness for example) must contact the school by 8:50am with the reason. Failure to do so will result in the school contacting parents/carers at home or work to ask where the child is. If it is not possible to contact parents/carers the matter will be referred to the local Police. This is to ensure the safety of the child.

## Exceptional Leave of Absence

*Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence.*

***Head teachers should not grant a leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a 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. (School Attendance, Statutory guidance and departmental advice, August 2013)***

St Catherine's School does not authorise family holidays or birthday celebrations. Parents wishing to take children out of school during term time for any reason must complete an exceptional leave of absence form (Appendix 2) well in advance of this leave. A decision will be made by the head teacher as to whether this is authorised or not. Consideration about the authorisation will consider; individual circumstances cited, length and time of leave requested, the child's overall attendance record, number of previous requests made and if the time impacts on any statutory assessments. Parents will be notified about the outcome of their request by the Pastoral Care Mentor.

Children's attendance is statutory in the term after their fifth birthday. However, children in Reception with poor attendance miss out on vital "settling in" time, can struggle to make and maintain friendships and find it difficult to adapt to school routines and structures.

## **Penalty Notices**

If your child is taken out of school without permission (or a request has been unauthorised), they will receive an unauthorised mark in the school registers and each parent may receive a fixed penalty notice from the Local Authority. FPNs require a payment to the sum of £120, reduced to £60 if paid for within 21 days. Failure to pay within 28 days will lead to prosecution in a Magistrate's court.

It is hoped that parents will offer full support and cooperation regarding their child's attendance and the expectation from school is that the issuing of FPNs are few and far between. However, fines have and will be issued where necessary.

## **Lateness**

At St Catherine's we feel that children arriving late in the classroom disrupt both their own and the learning of others. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons; it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

The school day at St Catherine's is split into two sessions, morning and afternoon with a registration period at the beginning of each.

School starts at 08.50 am. Lateness is classed as any child who is not in their seat or classroom before or at 8:50am. All children arriving after 8:50am must report to the main school office so they can be signed in as late for safeguarding reasons. Children arriving after morning registration at 8:50am will receive a late mark in the register.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be contacted by the Pastoral Care Mentor or a member of the SLT to discuss any problems, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulty getting your child to school on time. Parents may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice if unauthorised lateness occurs six times in any four-week period. We encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality at every opportunity.

## **If a child does not return after a period of absence.**

If a child is absent for 5 days without contact with school after a period of leave or a child has 10 unknown absences, The Pastoral Care Mentor is obliged to contact the Local Authority's Missing in Education Officer or refer the child using the "Child missing in Education" form. This is a safeguarding requirement and the school's duty.

## **When children do return after a period of non-attendance**

How a child is received back in school after a period of poor attendance or unauthorised absence may crucially influence whether he or she is to achieve and maintain an improvement in attendance.

The following recommendations are made:

- Gentle encouragement and support in organising missed work helps to avoid the pupil feeling overwhelmed. This should be carefully coordinated beforehand if possible by the class teacher
- Parents should be actively involved in their child's reintegration. Inviting the parents into school and deciding on joint strategies may achieve this.
- Older pupils might be encouraged to act as helpers, befrienders or mentors to help to promote re-integration.
- Class teachers should promote a positive atmosphere which is welcoming to the returning pupil.
- Any internal support structure (for example, special needs provision, Pastoral Care Mentor support) should be used flexibly.

### **The Education Welfare Officer**

If difficulties with attendance persist regarding a child, the Pastoral Care Mentor is obliged to refer the child to the Educational Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can work with Early help agencies or can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. The Pastoral Lead will meet with the allocated Educational Welfare Officer half termly to discuss attendance and data. These figures are reported annually on reports and the figures are forwarded to the Local Authority (LA) and the Department of Education (DfE).

### **Partnership with parents**

The school values the support of parents in matters of attendance and punctuality and that if problems arise, parents are aware that working collaboratively and in partnership with school offers the best possible chance of a positive outcome.

October 2023






### Independent Traveller Form

St Catherine's RC Primary School will be continuing the Independent Traveller Alert Scheme. The aim is to ensure that the school has a record of all children coming to school without an adult. If your child travels to school without an adult, you must complete the attached form and return it to the school office as soon as possible. If an older sibling or other child is responsible for ensuring your child attends school, you must still complete the form. Completing this form prioritises your child in the first response process.

Please ensure your child does not arrive before 8.30am as the school cannot accept responsibility for children at this time. If your child is not attending school (due to illness for example), please contact the school before 8.30am to inform us. Failure to do so will result in the school calling your 2 contact numbers. Please ensure that these numbers are kept up to date. If we are unable to contact you, we will refer the matter to the local police.

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My child, in class \_\_\_\_\_is an independent traveller. I will ensure that they do not arrive at school before 8.30am. I agree to contact the school by 8.30am if my child is not attending school.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Print: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact No: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact No: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional emergency contact name and number: \_\_\_\_\_



### St Catherine's Exceptional Leave of Absence Request Form

Child's Name:..... Class.....

Name of Parent/Carer making request:.....

Dates requested:

.....

.....

How many school days?.....

Return to school date:.....

Reason for requested absence:

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Parent/Carer

Signature:.....Date.....

Please return completed form to the school office as soon as possible, prior to the requested absence.

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#### OFFICE USE ONLY

Child's name:

.....

Frequency of request:      1<sup>st</sup>      2<sup>nd</sup>      3<sup>rd</sup>

How many school days requested:..... Current

attendance:..... Child's

attainment:.....

Leave of absence authorised: Yes      No