

The Federation of St Cuthbert's & St Sebastian's Catholic Primary Schools



Attendance Policy – September 2021

St. Cuthbert's Catholic Primary & Nursery School

Our Mission Statement



We the pupils, parents, and staff of St Cuthbert's strive to create a caring, educational community where; Christian principles and standards are upheld, each person is valued and the spiritual, aesthetic and moral growth of individuals, as well as their intellectual and physical needs are met.

St. Sebastian's Catholic Primary & Nursery School

Our Mission Statement



Our school aims to be a community which reflects real Gospel values of love and forgiveness. A community in which each individual, child or adult can work and develop in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding; so as to broaden their appreciation of the world, its cultures and its people.

Study - Sanctity - Service

The Federation of St. Cuthbert's and St. Sebastian's Catholic Primary Schools

The Federation of St Cuthbert's & St Sebastian's Catholic Primary Schools recognise the clear link between the attendance and achievement of pupils. The aim of this policy, is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality for pupils across the federation in order to support learning and development.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding issues. It is important for our children to attend school each and every day and that we provide an educationally safe and secure environment.

In order to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that all pupils attend regularly and on time. Parents/carers should aim for their children to attend every day that the school is open. We set a target for all pupils to aim for 100% attendance with the expectation that all pupils achieve at least 97%. ***As a federation we define regular attendance as 97% or above.***

The Federation of St Cuthbert's & St Sebastian's Catholic Primary Schools believe teachers, parents, carers, pupils and all members of the wider school community have an important contribution in improving attendance and punctuality, ensuring pupils attend to achieve. This policy sets out how we will achieve this together and should be read in conjunction with the Attendance Flow Chart (see Appendix 4).

Aims:

- Maximise the overall percentage of pupil attendance and punctuality.
- Reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent and raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community.
- Provide support advice and guidance for parents/carers, pupils and staff.
- Develop clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for pupils.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data.
- Ensure a whole school approach to ensure consistency of intervention strategies.
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children's Services, Health and other partner agencies.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Attendance and punctuality are a collective responsibility including: all members of staff, parent/carers and pupils. To help us all focus on this, The Federation of St Cuthbert's & St Sebastian's Catholic Primary Schools will ensure:

- Appropriate interventions are in place to improve both attendance and punctuality.
- An appropriate curriculum is provided and will be reviewed regularly.
- The need for high quality teaching and learning throughout the school is recognised as being essential to the promotion of attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils are provided with appropriate support to minimise absence from school. This includes support from school and multi-agency provision as appropriate.
- Special Educational Needs, disadvantaged, Looked After Children and other vulnerable groups are given appropriate support, and attendance is monitored rigorously.

- Effective partnerships with parent/carers are encouraged through regular contact and support provided.
- Parents/carers are kept informed of pupils' attendance and punctuality through first day response, termly progress reports, individual letters and meetings when required.
- Good attendance and punctuality is rewarded through regular incentives.
- Attendance and punctuality is regularly discussed with pupils in class and at assemblies.
- Staff attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff should ensure these are followed.

Safeguarding:

A child not attending school is considered to be a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is required.

Expectations of Parent/Carer:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers' legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law. The expectations of parents/carers are:

- To ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.
- To inform school on the first day of their child's absence and to keep school updated on the progress of any illness.
- To provide proof of illness / accident in the form of a doctor's note, prescription or prescribed medicine container if this is requested by school / Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
- If a Dojo message/phone call is received as a result of their child's absence it is important that parents /carers respond to this message to ensure their child is appropriately safeguarded.
- To keep in contact with school if there are difficult home circumstances which require support from the school.
- To ensure the school has a current emergency contact numbers and names. As a school we request a minimum of two emergency contact details be provided (the child should know those included on the contact list).
- To take holidays during the school holiday periods. Parents who take children on holiday in term time will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer, a Penalty Notice will be initiated and you may receive a fine from the Local Authority.
- To take routine non-emergency dental and medical appointments outside of school hours (where possible) otherwise appointment letters and cards must be shown to school.
- To co-operate fully with the school in our aim to improve attendance.
- To collect their children on time from school and make separate arrangements if siblings have clubs. Parents will not expect staff to "look after" their children if a sibling is attending a club.
- To attend any meetings with school staff or Governors regarding attendance concerns.
- Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing to the Head Teacher and can only be authorised by the Head Teacher.

Expectations of school:

- To inform parents of their responsibilities for maintaining regular attendance and punctuality for their child.
- To inform parents regularly if their child's attendance is causing concern.
- A panel of governors will invite selected parents in to school if their child's attendance and/or punctuality is giving cause for concern.
- To aim to support families who are experiencing difficulties and/or crisis.
- Refer families requiring support to the Education Welfare Officer as necessary.
- In agreement with the Education Welfare Officer, Penalty Notices (see appendix 1) will be used if a child has a series of unauthorised absences.
- All staff will promote the importance of good attendance.
- We recognise and reward good attendance throughout the school with weekly assemblies, termly and annual prizes. **However due to circumstances of the pandemic, we feel it to be not appropriate to currently have prizes. This will be reviewed as more guidance is received from the LA.**
- The parents of those children in 2YO / Foundation 1 who exhibit poor attendance may be asked to reconsider their place in Foundation Stage.
- The School Admin **Assistant or Officer** will record attendance on SIMS and amend codes.
- All staff will review persistent lates and those children whose attendance falls below 92% (cause for concern) SLT will review attendance figures each week and contact parents to discuss, if deemed appropriate.
Letters to parents /conversation etc are recording on the CPOMS system to provide historic and recent attendance documentation and data.
- If necessary parents will receive a letter, home visit or will be invited into school to meet with EWO/Governors.
- School will inform the EWO of the name and contact details of any child who fails to attend regularly or has been absent for ten or more school days without explanation or for no good reason. If there are safeguarding issues this will be 2 days.
- SLT have established protocol for "Attendance Calls" if no first response follow up is received.

Authorised Absence:

Authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. **It is the Head Teacher, not parents/carers who make the decision to authorise absence from school.**

Unauthorised Absence:

Unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent/carer's request. This includes but is not exclusive to:

- Parents/carers giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings.
- Absences which have not been explained.

- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get their mark.

This type of absence may lead to the use of Penalty Notices or other sanctions from the Local Authority. From September 2019 the Federation of St Cuthbert's & St Sebastian's Catholic Primary Schools can issue warning letters (in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct) to parents/carers where their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any one term. The warning period will cover a period of 20 school days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time the school will refer the case to the local authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued.

Persistent Absence:

- Pupils are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DFE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DFE expects schools to intervene well before pupils reach a level of persistent absence.
- As a directive from the Local Authority, if a child attendance falls below 92% they will trigger a cause for concern whereby parents, governors and where appropriate the EWO will be engaged.
- Whilst we understand that pupils can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. If a pupil is reluctant to attend or a parent/carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school as soon as possible to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution.
- Parent/Carers are asked to contact the school office in the first instance.

5 school days = 10 session = in danger of becoming a Persistent Absentee

Regular Attendance is important:

Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect pupils' learning. Pupils who have time off school often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

- 90% attendance is equivalent to a pupil missing one half day per week or approximately 118 lessons per year.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence from school, without a good reason is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO):

- The Education Welfare Officer – provides support for parents/carer and advice on problems relating to attendance, and encourages good communications between home and school.
- The EWO will always try to resolve the situation by agreement with the family but, if a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists, the EWO will be required to consider the instigation of legal proceedings which include; Penalty Notices, Parental Prosecution and Education

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Supervision Orders. Details regarding attendance law, penalty fines and legal interventions are available from the Local Authority.

Leave of absence in term time:

The Law does not give any entitlement to parents/carers to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in truly exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave. Parents/carers can receive a Penalty Notice for taking their child on holiday during term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively.

Punctuality:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day they can miss work and late arriving pupils disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the pupil arriving late and can encourage future absence. If they are late they are missing out on one of the most important parts of the day.

Those children arriving after 8.55am should enter via the office door and will be marked as late. On every occasion, a child arrives late Parent or Carer should take them to the school office where the adult will be asked to sign them in. The parents of those children who arrive late three times in quick succession may be asked to make an appointment to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. If there is no improvement the child's name will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Local Authority (LA) Requirements:

- All children of compulsory school age must attend school.
- Schools keep two registers: the admissions register and the attendance register.
- It is the duty of the school to record the presence or absence of pupils on their roll.
- Each class will have an attendance register, which will be called, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.
- After morning registration the register will be returned to the school office where absences will be monitored.
- Any absence will be recorded in the first day response diary. The administration staff will contact the parents/carers of anyone who has an unauthorised absence.
- Parents must explain each absence.
- Registers must be returned to the school office following afternoon registration.

Deleting a pupil's name from the register:

From the 1st September 2016 changes were introduced to the Pupil Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

As a school we are now required to:

- Inform the LA in *every* circumstance when deleting a pupil's name from the admission register

- Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school.
- Provide information to the LA when registering new pupils, including the pupil's address and previous school.

If your child is leaving our school parents/carers are asked to:

- Give the school office comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.
- If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Temporary School Closure:

If the schools (either one or both) in the Federation have to close due to severe weather conditions, fire or training days, no attendance registers are needed and the LA will be informed.

All school staff, parents/carers and pupils need to work as a team to support the attendance and achievement of pupils. This continued support therefore is vital in making every pupil's journey through school a success.

Policy Written: September 2021

Sent to the Governors (Admissions Committee): September 2021

Next Review: September 2021

Staff Responsible: [Jacqui Mulligan](#), [Claire Bellis Knox](#), Donna Radburn / Nicola Von Bargaen

Statutory Review as per DfE: Annually

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Appendix 1 – Letter sent to parents/carers to explain the penalty notice system.

New Local Authority Attendance Policy with effect from September 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

As you know schools are held accountable by the Local Authority and Ofsted to ensure that attendance of all children is maximised. It is the legal duty of parents/carers to ensure their children attend school (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

The main points to note will be the introduction of Penalty Notices (fining) by the Local Authority for any unauthorised absences. An unauthorised absence would be a holiday in term time or absence without providing a reason.

If your child is absent due to illness or an appointment, we may request proof. Acceptable proof would be a medical appointment card or copy of prescription label through 'Care at the Chemist'

<https://www.brownlowhealth.co.uk/information/care-at-the-chemist/>

(Further details are held within the policy and there is a link on the school website.)

It is important to note that the fine is per child per adult e.g. If you take a holiday in term time and you have 1 child who lives with 1 parent the initial fine would be £60.

Number of adults with parental responsibility	Number of children	X £60	Total
1	1	£60	£60
1	2	£60	£120
2	2	£60	£240
2	3	£60	£360

Any parent/carer who takes their child out of school without permission, risks receiving a fine of £60 from the Local Authority. This has to be paid within 21 days. After that it rises to £120. If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.

Any parents/carers who were thinking of booking a holiday in term time next year, even if you book it under the existing policy, the absence is currently unauthorised so the penalty notice would come into effect once you have returned from holiday.

If you have any queries regarding punctuality or attendance please contact the school office.

Head Teacher

Appendix 2 – Absence and Attendance Codes

I	Present in school am
\	Present in school pm
L	Late arrival before the register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity
D	Dual Registered – at another educational establishment
J	At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work Experience
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
H	Holiday authorised by the school
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)
M	Medical or dental appointments
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
G	Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the
N	Reason for absence not yet provided
O	Absent from school without authorisation
U	Arrived in school after registration closed
X	Not required to be in school

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Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
Z	Pupil not on admission register
Ⓔ	Planned whole or partial school closure

Covid Attendance coding procedures

(The following is the most recent guidance, and we will amend accordingly as appropriate).

Attendance procedures for the period of school re-opening from September 2020 until matters are reviewed in January 2021.

**Please refer to DfE guidance at the end of this document for information on vulnerability, shielding and quarantine requirements*

Background

In March 2020 when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, the Government made amendments to the legislation which meant, parents would not be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

It is now vital for **all children** to return to school to minimise the long-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

School Attendance will be compulsory from the beginning of the Autumn Term in September 2020.

Your child will be welcomed back into school and the usual rules on **School Attendance** will apply,

- It is the duty of the parent to ensure that their child attends school regularly (where the child is a registered pupil) and is of compulsory school age
- It is the responsibility of the school to record attendance and follow up absence.
- The availability of the local authority to issue sanctions relating to unauthorised absence from school will now continue.

Who cannot attend school?

- **Pupils who have Covid symptoms.**
- **Pupils who live in the same household as someone who has Covid symptoms.**

Where this is the case, please refer to the NHS testing website and inform the school immediately.

If someone in your household is extremely clinically vulnerable, the school will discuss individual cases with parents as necessary.

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. However:

- A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

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- Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the [current advice on shielding](#)
- Where you and your child have been delayed in returning to the UK or travelling abroad and have been told to remain at home, you should not attend school during the period of quarantine. Please discuss such circumstances with the school and provide documentary evidence in support of the absence; school will consider the circumstances of the trip/time abroad to inform our decision to authorise absence or not. Current advice on [travel corridors](#)
- If rates of the virus rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore, they may be temporarily absent.
- Some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to. You can find more advice from the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we will offer access to education at home resources. We will monitor engagement with this activity to ensure learning is being accessed appropriately. This may also apply to some pupils with Education Health Care Plans.

Where pupils are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

All other pupils must attend school.

Pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies and where the absence has been **authorised** for example;

- The pupil has been granted a leave of absence
- The pupil is unable to attend because of sickness
- The pupil is absent for a necessary religious observance etc

We understand that some pupils, parents and households may be reluctant or anxious about returning to school. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such. This may also include some pupils with EHCP plans.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, please discuss your concerns with the school so that we can understand your situation and reassure you of the measures we have in place to reduce the risk in school. The school may contact the SEND and School Nursing Teams for advice and support, and we may require medical verification or other relevant documentation in order to assess risk.

Punctuality

Some groups of pupils may be given staggered start and finish times to keep 'bubbles' apart as they arrive and leave school. Where this is the case, you will be informed. Staggered start and finish times will not reduce the amount of overall teaching time each child receives. Please ensure your child arrives on time and is collected on time in order to minimise disruption in line with the school's Covid risk management. Please contact the school ahead if you are experiencing difficulties. If lateness persists, the school will want to discuss this with you and agree some support measures; if matters do not improve, the lateness will **not be authorised** and the matter may be referred to the local authority Education Welfare Service.

Please refer to our 'drop off and collection' arrangements and **be aware that the gathering of parents at the school gates and otherwise coming onto the site without an appointment is not allowed.**

Absence Procedures

- **Parents and carers should notify the school as normal** if your child is unable to attend on any given day. You must update the school regularly regarding any ongoing absence.
- Where a child is not regularly attending school, we will discuss this with you to understand what the difficulties are and agree some supportive measures to improve matters as early as possible. Normal absence procedures will be followed (please refer to our main Attendance Policy).
- Where the school's efforts do not result in an improvement in attendance or punctuality, and if there is no valid reason for the child to be absent, we will refer to the local authority Education Welfare Service for additional support, advice and statutory intervention.

Procedures for COVID related absence.

If a parent reports a pupil absence due to COVID symptoms they should stay at home, be advised to get a test immediately and engage with NHS test and trace process. Tests can be booked online through the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus website or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet.

- **Code X** to be applied during the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known.
- **Parents must inform school immediately of the results of a test:**
- If a pupil tests negative, they should return to school the following day if they are well.
- If the child tests positive they should follow the 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection' and must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. (This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone) The 10-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal.
- **Code X** should be used for the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known. If a positive result is confirmed the pupil should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

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- Any siblings in the same household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days.
 - **Code X** to be applied.
- If a pupil tests positive but has no symptoms for COVID-19 they must self-isolate for 10 days, starting from the day the test was taken.
- If they develop symptoms during this isolation period, **they must restart** their 10-day isolation from the day they develop symptoms.
 - **Code X** should be used for the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known. Once a positive result is confirmed, the pupil should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.
- After 10 days, if the pupil still has a temperature they should continue to self-isolate and seek medical advice. The pupil does not need to self-isolate after 10 days if they only have a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.
 - **Code I** to be applied
- For all pupils in a 'bubble' who have been sent home and asked to self-isolate for 14 days
 - **Code X** should be applied for all pupils who have been asked to self-isolate. The coding would be updated to **I** if any of the pupils subsequently develop symptoms and test positive for COVID.

Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine:

As usual parents should plan their holidays as part of school breaks. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK;

- **Code X** is to be applied
- **From September, the normal rules will apply during the period of absence relating to the holiday dates.** Please refer to our main policy for guidance regarding holidays taken during term time.

Referrals to the Education Welfare Service

- All unauthorised absence is reported to the Education Welfare Service so the local authority can offer additional advice and support to parents as necessary. Where unauthorised absence is persistent, sanctions may be imposed to include warnings, penalty notices, prosecution in the magistrate's court or an education supervision order through the family proceedings court.
- Where a child or family is away from home including abroad, and unable to return home, parents are expected to provide the school with detailed information as to the whereabouts, reasons for travel and estimated return dates. Where the school is not satisfied with the

reasons provided, the absence will not be authorised, and this could result in the local authority issuing a Penalty Notice (please refer to our main Attendance Policy)

- Leave of absence can only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**, at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body. **Holidays in term time are not viewed as exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to time off during term time.**
- Where the school and the Education Welfare Service have failed to locate the child/family within 20 school days, the child will be referred to the **Local authority Children Missing Education Pupil Tracking Officer** (CME officer) who will undertake additional checks with other agencies to locate them, including consultation with social care, the police, health and housing. Where these enquiries do not lead to confirmation of the child's whereabouts, the matter will remain open to that service who will widen their enquiries. In these circumstances, the school cannot guarantee to keep a school place open for your child.

Safeguarding

If at any time the school are concerned for a child's safety or welfare from any year group, we will consult with the relevant agencies and follow the local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.

*Link to DfE Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>