

St Columba's Catholic Primary School



*Recognising every person is precious to God, our vision is to
provide an excellent Catholic Education*

Attendance Policy 2019-20

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1. Introduction

1.1 St Columba's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all of its pupils and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent attendance for all. There is clear evidence of a link between good attendance at school and high levels of achievement and attainment. Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 St Columba's Catholic Primary School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to benefit fully from the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 St Columba's Catholic Primary School values all pupils; we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

1.4 St Columba's Catholic Primary School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

2. Legal Framework

2.1 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Pupils on roll at St Columba's Catholic Primary School are expected to attend each day unless there is a good reason not to.

2.2 The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. Categorising absence

3.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

3.2 Absence can only be authorised by **the school** and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

3.3 Parents should advise the school by telephone or on the online form on the school website before 8.45am on the first day of absence and provide the school with a reason for the absence and an expected date of return. This should be followed up

in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

3.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

3.5 Illness In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. **Parents will be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness.** This will usually be in the form of a doctor's appointment card, prescription etc, failure to do so will result in the absence being marked as unauthorised.

3.6 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school before and /or after the appointment. Taking a whole day off school is not acceptable. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

3.7 Other Authorised Circumstances this relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

3.8 Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

3.9 Holidays: Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. In line with Government legislation the school policy and the Local Education Authority policy is that all holidays should be taken in school closure periods, unless there are exceptional circumstances where this cannot happen. Evidence will be requested to back up any application to take leave during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and should be made aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year. The taking of unauthorised time off for the purpose of a holiday may lead to parents being issued with a Penalty Notice which if not paid could result in prosecution in Magistrates Court.

3.9.2 Only the Head of School or Executive Headteacher can authorise leave of absence from school.

3.9.3 Parents wishing to apply for a leave of absence in term time must use the **Holiday Absence in School time request form** and **City of Bradford Application of Leave of Absence from School** form before any arrangements are made and book an appointment with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil

- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- The timing of the leave e.g. during SATs or the beginning of a new term.
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

3.9.4 All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing. Where a request has been granted the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents must contact school should any delays occur
- That the child's place may be withdrawn if the family do not return as expected

3.9.5 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child will lose their school place.

3.9.6 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is still absent from school, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the Local Authority for them to issue a Penalty Notice which will incur a fine of £60 per parent per child this will if not paid within 21 days increase to £120 to be paid within 7 days failure to pay within the time allowed will result in the case being processed before the magistrates Court.

3.9.7 Only in **exceptional circumstances** will absence be agreed. In all cases parents will be required to justify why the leave needs to be taken during term time.

3.10 Religious Observance - St Columba's Catholic Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

3.10.1 St Columba's Catholic Primary School would normally only grant leave for one day for any religious festival and would limit these to no more than 3 days in any year, further absences would be unauthorised.

3.11 Late Arrival. Registration period is from 8.45am, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. (L) The register will close at 9.30am pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late (U) this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

3.12 On arrival after 8.55am, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. It is expected a parent will accompany a pupil to explain the reason for lateness. The

parent must enter the child's name and reason for lateness into Inventory (the school's electronic signing in system).

3.12.2 The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

3.12.3 The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry or the taxi didn't turn up.

3.13 Unauthorised absence - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

3.13.1 Examples of reasons for not authorising absences would include;-

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- No explanation given
- The school is not satisfied with the explanation
- Staying at home to mind the house
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Illness of a parent
- Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of school

3.14 Authorised absences

3.14.2 Absences will be authorised in the following circumstances

- In exceptional circumstances and permission has been granted by the Head teacher and parents have sought permission in advance.
- Where the school is satisfied the child is too ill to attend.
- Where the child has a medical appointment and parents have returned the child to school immediately following the appointment.
- Where there is unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control e.g. extreme weather conditions
- Where the absence occurs on a day set out for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.
- Where the local Authority has a duty to make travel arrangements and have failed to discharge that duty.
- Where the pupil is excluded and no alternative provision has been made, or is being educated at alternative provision on a temporary basis..
- In other **exceptional circumstances** (e.g. a family bereavement) and for a very limited period (the circumstances will be deemed exceptional by the Head of School)

4. Deletions from the Register

4.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- **When pupils leave or arrive into school all appropriate checks will be made with the pupils previous school, and local authority if appropriate, to gather as much information as possible.**

4.2 St Columba's Catholic Primary School will follow Bradford Local Authority Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 St Columba's Catholic Primary School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community. As such, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents.
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters.
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Agree school attendance targets and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school.
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings.
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Department of Children, Schools and Families as required and on time.
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance

- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

5.2 The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
 - Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
 - Return school attendance data to the Department for Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
 - Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
 - Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
 - Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
 - Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
 - Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
 - Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated
 - Ensure staff are fully trained in attendance matters.
 - Ensure all staff set good examples of their own attendance and punctuality(in line with the staff absence policy)

5.3 Pastoral Staff/Class Teachers will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve

- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

5.4 Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return by 9.30am on the first day of any absence and follow this up with a note on return to school.
- Avoid unnecessary absences by making appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school and take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time

6. Using Attendance Data

6.1 Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

6.2 Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment. Every week class teachers will be provided with the previous week's attendance data for their class in order to help identify patterns of absence and support strategies to improve attendance of specific pupils.

6.3 All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

7. Support Systems

7.1 School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

7.2 St Columba's Catholic Primary School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

7.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panel meetings
- Parenting contracts
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice Activities or School Councils
- Friendship groups/buddying systems
- PSHE/ SMSC
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages
- Parenting classes

7.4 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

7.5 Where these interventions have been implemented and have had little or no impact, the parent/s will be invited to an Attendance Panel meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- Complete an Early Help Referral
- Refer to the Local Authority to initiate legal proceedings

Where a parent fails to attend the meeting or where they fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs a home visit with the purpose to engage with the parent will be carried out prior to referral to the Local Authority.

8. Legal Sanctions

8.1 Prosecution - Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child where he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

8.1.1 Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified via a referral to the Education welfare Service and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court.

8.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

8.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

8.2 Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

8.3 Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence within a 6 week period and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve

8.3.1 A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £60 fine is paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued. (Amendments to the 2007 regulations come into force on 1 September 2013 which reduce the timescale for payment to £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days) Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure a pupil's attendance at school.

8.3.2 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Bradford Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

Conclusion

Regular school attendance contributes to the health and safety of children and supports children in reaching their maximum potential. Being a member of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them

to contribute and to be responsible for the well-being of others. Good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps support a prosperous and fulfilling life style

This attendance policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. St Columba's Catholic Primary School reserves the right to amend this to reflect any changes in this guidance or legislation as appropriate. The policy will otherwise be reviewed annually.