

# ST BERNARD'S HIGH SCHOOL



## STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Chair of Governors

Next Review: February 2025

St Bernard's is a school community, which aims to live by Jesus' commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you."

*We are a Catholic learning community committed to the ongoing development of the entire potential of every person, achieved through a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.*

*We care for each other as individuals of equal worth, regardless of status, sex, race or religion and thus actively seek to promote safeguarding, justice and fairness.*

*We provide an atmosphere in which all can grow in our Faith, and encourage this faith by a lively relevant liturgy.*

*We work with parent/carers/carers/carers, parishes, local communities and industry to prepare our students for the opportunities of adulthood.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

St Bernard's High School aims to provide excellence in education. As Christians we have a responsibility to develop and use our talents to the best of our ability. The purpose of the Attendance Policy is to 'promote the pursuit of excellence by developing strategies to support student attendance. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The experience of staff, educational research and DFE guidance, evidence the high correlation between regular attendance and achievement in all areas of school life. Our aim is to encourage each individual student to develop positive patterns of attendance and punctuality.

### **Why Regular Attendance is so important**

There is a strong correlation between the amount of absence from school and the qualifications that students achieve. The expectation regarding attendance is that students achieve 95% as a minimum. Every lesson in school matters and students who have time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well at school. Regular absence can limit opportunities and set up bad habits for work and life. One day off equates to 300 minutes of learning

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence also disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

### **Statutory Framework**

Parent/carers have a duty to ensure their daughter/son's regular attendance at school and this is a legal responsibility. Where there is persistent absence from school without good reason, this is an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

*'If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent/carer is guilty of an offence.'* – **Education Act 1996**

By law, the school is obliged to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by letter/message will the absence be authorised.

Section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers head teachers to issue penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 have recently been amended in the Education (Penalty Notices)

(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and states that a penalty notice may be issued if a minimum of 10 sessions or 5 days of unauthorised absence are taken during a term. This includes parentally-condoned absence and holidays taken in term time and also persistent lateness.

References for employers, universities and colleges always include a comment on attendance.

Sixth Form students who have a 16 – 19 Bursary are required to have good attendance for the Bursary to continue.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Within the community of St Bernard's there are many stakeholders. The following are the key roles and responsibilities.

### **Parents/Carers**

Parents and Carers have a legal responsibility in respect of school attendance, enshrined in the 1996 Education Act. Parents and Carers should:

- Ensure young people of school age who are registered at school attend regularly and punctually.
- Where there are absences the parent/carer must telephone the school on the first day of absence and/ or contact the school using the school gateway app
- Parent/Carers have to apply for a leave of absence for their Daughter/Son from school to participate in an outside educational opportunity within school time.
- Parents/Carers are requested NOT to arrange holidays during term time as these cannot, by law, be authorised.
- It is an expectation that all students attend religious celebrations at the school, especially Whole School Masses. Any absences on these days will be unauthorised, unless medical proof of illness is received by the school.

### **Students**

Within a Catholic Christian community it is the duty of:

- Students to attend regularly and punctually so talents and skills can be developed to the full.
- Students should do everything within their power to ensure good working habits.
- Students are expected to attend regularly and be appropriately prepared for lessons.

### **The Governing Body**

The Governing Body has the following statutory duties in relation to attendance:

- Ensure that admission and attendance registers are properly kept. These may be used in Courts.
- Ensure that a policy is set.
- Ensure that attendance statistics are made available to the Department for Education.
- Ensure that attendance data, including authorised and unauthorised absence is provided in the Governing Body's annual report to parents and in the prospectus.
- Set term dates for each year.

Governors will also:

- Agree attendance targets to help the school to further improve attendance.
- Participate in training pertaining to attendance when necessary.

- The Governing Body may wish to appoint a Governor with specific responsibilities for attendance issues.
- A governing representative will participate in an Attendance Panel when this is necessary. The Attendance Panel will be chaired by a representative from the Local Authority.

### **Head Teacher**

The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for attendance and ensures that the school meets the legal requirements, sets required targets for attendance and unauthorised absence and publishes attendance figures. In addition:

- Ensures that Parents/Carers are aware of their responsibilities regarding attendance and punctuality at the point of admission.
- Ensures that staff takes a consistent and positive approach to attendance and punctuality, using agreed strategies.
- The Head Teacher will ensure the school and its representatives work in an effective partnership with other external agencies which may support attendance (e.g BRES Counsellor, CFCS etc).

There are key legal responsibilities regarding Admissions:

- Ensure that the admissions register and every amendment made to the admissions register must follow procedures laid out in Department of Education 'Advice on Attendance'.
- Ensure procedures are in place to report to Parents/Carers regularly on school performance and how attendance/punctuality impacts.
- Ensuring relevant data reports are produced for monitoring attendance/punctuality.

There are important legal responsibilities pertaining to safeguarding:

- Ensure that the Local Authority is informed of any student who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they have been taken out of school by their Parents and are being educated outside the school system (home educated); have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered; have a medical condition certified where it is unlikely they will be in a fit state of health to attend school; are in custody for a period of more than 4 months due to a final court order and it is reasonable to believe they will not be returning to school at the end of the period; or have been permanently excluded.
- Ensure that the Local Authority is notified in advance of a deletion to the admission register, when the school becomes aware that the deletion will be made.
- Work with the Local Authority and adhere to guidelines and policies pertaining to Children at Risk of Missing Education.
- Where Parents/Carers decide to 'home educate' will ensure school have written notification and following this will inform the student's Local Authority and the Student will be deleted from the admission register.
- Manage the work of the Learning Mentors.

### **Senior Leader (Attendance)**

The key responsibilities include:

- Maintaining a strategic overview of attendance and punctuality across the school.
- Ensuring Parents/Carers and Students have information pertaining to the procedures on attendance and punctuality.
- Developing the processes for staged intervention to promote good attendance and ensuring concerns are shared with Parents.

- Giving Parents/Carers information about attendance in the School Newsletter.
- Liaising with Heads of Year/Head of Inclusion/SENCO and other Pastoral staff to ensure that effective monitoring procedures are in place and advising the Head Teacher accordingly.
- Ensuring staff keep registers in the correct manner and are aware of correct codes to use.
- Liaising and meeting with Local Authority Child and Family Early Intervention representatives and coordinating L2 and L3 support
- Advising Parents/Carers of their legal responsibilities regarding attendance.
- Regularly report to SLT and Pastoral Teams on attendance figures affecting whole school, Key Stage, cohort analysis.
- Will lead on any attendance matter where there are Child Protection issues.
- Promote training of Pastoral Staff on matters pertaining to attendance.

### **Heads of Year**

Are responsible for:

- Reporting to Parents/Carers of Students within a Year Group on their daughter's/son's progress, both academic or pastoral.
- Contacting parents prior to Level 2 meetings to discuss patterns and concerns. In the case of the Head of Sixth Form they are responsible for coordinating L2 and L3 support for Sixth Form students.
- Completing EHPs where required and related to attendance matters.
- Support Tutor Teams to take responsibility for their tutees attendance/punctuality patterns.
- Celebrating good attendance and rewarding good or improving attendance.
- Ensuring 100% attendance certificates are issued regularly.
- Liaising with Senior Leader so that attendance records are up to date.
- Co-ordinate support strategies for attendance so that concerns can be resolved.
- Promoting good attendance in Assemblies and PSHE.
- Liaising with Head of Inclusion/SENCO over SEN students and those with long term medical conditions.

### **Head of Inclusion/SENCO**

The Head of Inclusion/SENCO is responsible for Students on the SEN Register and will have an operational role reflecting the Heads of Year (see above).

In addition:

- Students with long-term medical conditions will be supported by the Head of Inclusion/SENCO through the use of an IEP to monitor required support.

### **Learning Mentors/Learning Coaches/EAL Coordinator**

- Working closely with the Heads of Year there will be times throughout the year when Learning Mentors/Coaches will support other attendance concerns where they exist.

### **Careers Co-ordinator**

- The Careers Coordinator will monitor the attendance of students where Alternative Education has been arranged.

### **Tutors**

Tutors are the first port of call for their tutees they play a crucial role in maintaining good attendance by:

- Encouraging a positive approach to attendance in the Tutor Group.
- Ensuring that in morning registration periods the electronic registration is completed with accuracy and in accordance with given advice.
- Discuss absences with students and ensure codes used in register are accurate, and identifies reasons for absence and address these issues.

### **Academic Staff**

All Academic staff will be kept informed if a student's attendance remains a concern. Staff will be directed by the Head of Year if work can be sent home.

### **Strategies for Promoting Good Attendance**

Attendance is promoted through Assemblies, PSHE programme and Award ceremonies, as well as through 100% attendance certificates issued each term. In addition, the Newsletter updates student and parents on the legal position and expectancies regarding attendance and punctuality as well as changes in school policy/absence procedures.

Attendance is also discussed at the Key Stage Information evening at the start of the academic year. Attendance data is regularly collected and analysed in order to identify patterns and trends and thus inform policy and practice. Positive measures will be used to find a resolution to a concern. This may mean that work goes home for Student who have long term medical diagnoses, or that Students are reintegrated back on a modified learning timetable on their return to school. Creative strategies will always be sought.

A wide range of external support agencies are used in the promotion of good attendance including; CFCS, Brentwood Education Service Counsellor, Social Services.

### **Absence Procedures**

Where a student is absent **Parent/Carers must;**

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence. This is a Safeguarding requirement.
- Students are registered once a day by their Tutor. In addition, staff register students at the beginning of each lesson. If a student is leaving school for an authorised absence e.g. dental treatment, they must sign out at reception. This is a Safeguarding requirement.
- Write into the school in advance if they are aware of future planned absences.
- If a student is absent through sickness for more than 5 days then a medical certificate should be obtained.

### **Religious Celebration and Spiritual Days**

It is an expectation that all Students attend religious celebrations at the school, including Days of Reflection and especially Whole School Masses. These are times of spiritual reflection and are important opportunities for staff and students to share faith with one another. As such any absences on these days will be unauthorised unless medical proof of illness is received by the school.

### **Protocol on return to school from absence**

The period of absence may be one day or more but the same protocol should be followed. The purpose of the protocol is to enable students to take greater personal ownership and responsibility for their own learning and recognise that being absent from school for any length

of time will have an impact on their learning. The protocol is designed to reduce any negative impact.

- On the first day of return to school the student should ask their form tutor for an 'absence sheet'. The student will use this sheet to record what they have missed.
- The class teacher will sign the form once the missed work has been completed.
- The form will be returned to the form tutor once all teachers have signed it.

## References

Good attendance and punctuality are crucial to achieving full potential. This is recognised also as important by employers, colleges and universities. As such, attendance and punctuality are always commented upon in all reports and references.

## Absence and Attendance Codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way.

### Present at School

Schools are legally obliged to register students' presence of absence twice a day. Students are registered in the morning before the start of lessons. Students are expected to arrive promptly to morning registration for 8.50am. Students are registered for the afternoon 'session' within lesson 3 registration.

If a student were to leave the school premises **after** 'registration' they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

If a student is late to school they must ensure that they sign in at reception. A late arrival is still counted as 'present' and a code 'L' is entered in the register. The morning registers are kept open until 11am. This means that a student could return from an early morning dental appointment (which it was not possible to arrange out of school hours) by this time and still get a 'present' mark. A student arriving after the register has closed will be marked absent with code 'U' or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

### Authorised Absence Codes used when students are not present in school are as follows:

'C' – Leave of absence authorised by school and here consideration will be given to the nature of the request; the frequency; whether advance notice was given; student's attainment' attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

'E' – Excluded but no alternative provision made. Alternative provision will be arranged for an excluded student from the sixth day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion.

'I' – Illness (not medical or dental appointments). Parents must advise the school as soon as possible when their son/daughter is ill. The school reserves the right to request medical evidence to support illness (prescriptions, appointment cards etc). 'I' is now used for confirmed Covid cases

'M' – Medical or dental appointments. Parents are asked to make such appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, the student should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

'R' – Religious observance

'S' – Study Leave.

'T' – Traveller absence due to travelling for occupational purposes.

### **Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity**

An approved educational activity is where a student is taking part in a **supervised** educational activity such as a field trip, educational visit, work experience etc. Students can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the educational activity has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

### **Other codes used for when students are deemed 'present'**

'B' – Off site educational activity approved by the school. Cannot be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a student is at home during school work.

'D' – for 'dual registration' when student is attending a pupil referral unit, hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis, or where traveller students are known to be attending another school during the session in question.

'J' – When a student is at interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment.

'P' – Participating in a supervised sporting activity.

'V' – Educational visit or school trip.

'W' – Work experience

### **Understanding Types of Absence**

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

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parent/carers/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term-time

Whilst a student may need to be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school for other reasons. It is important that parent/carers contact the school to discuss these issues so that support can be put in place. Under no circumstances should parent/carers give in to pressure from their daughter/son's excusing them from attending for anything other than justified reasons.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**



A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level will do considerable damage to a student's educational prospects. The school will see this as a priority group for intervention and support.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Where there are concerns, parent/carers/carers/carers are informed of this immediately and invited to attend a meeting in school to discuss support strategies to help improve their daughter/son's attendance.

Persistently absent students are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and by the Local Authority. Where appropriate a referral may be made to the Local Authority Attendance Officer.

\*Where a student's level of absence is causing concern, the school reserves the right to request some form of medical proof that they were unfit to attend in order to authorise their absence.

Where a student is absent, **the School will:**

- Always contact parent/carers on the first day of absence if they have not already heard from parent/carers.
- Set attendance targets where this is appropriate.
- Invite parent/carers in to discuss the situation with the appropriate member of staff if absence persists. The purpose here is to support and offer guidance.
- May invite parent/carers to complete a, Early Help Assessment Form in order to ensure that any support needed from other agencies to help improve attendance can be put in place.
- Consider referring the matter to the Child & Family Early Intervention Service if attendance moves below 85%.

### **Telephone Numbers**

There are times when the school needs to contact parent/carers for lots of reasons, including to discuss absence. It is imperative the School has up-to-date contact numbers at all times. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **Child & Family Early Intervention Service**

Parent/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with school staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may refer to the Child & Family Early Intervention Service. He/She will also try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if this is unsuccessful, and if unauthorised absence persists, this service can use sanctions such as Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court.

Alternatively, parent/carers or children may wish to contact the Child & Family Early Intervention Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent from the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

### **LATENESS**

Punctuality is an important part of self-discipline and is essential to good time management. Poor punctuality is an indicator that there may be issues which will impact negatively on a student's academic performance and general well-being. Students are expected to arrive on time for registration. Any lateness is recorded in the register. If a student misses registration, they report to the school reception and. Marked in as 'late' Form tutors will notify

Heads of Year of problems concerning lateness and where there is neither valid reason nor improvement, students will serve detentions accordingly.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Where a student 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. This could include exam information and details. Late arriving students can also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the students concerned and this can also encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness**

Registers are marked at **8:50am** and students will receive a late mark if they are not in registration by that time.

The lessons start at **9.10am** and we expect your daughter/son to be in class at that time.

### **HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME**

Taking holidays in term time will affect schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parent/carers to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Parent/carers/carers/carers are reminded of this at the start of the school year.

The school will not authorise holidays taken in term time.

### **TRUANCY**

Students truant for many reasons. Whilst rare at this school, we look at each incident of truancy, inform parent/carers/carers/carers of the problem and deal with the situation accordingly. If it is clear that the truancy is an indication that, for the individual child, there are problems within school, the school will seek to work with parent/carers/carers/carers and students to resolve the problems causing truancy in an appropriate manner. This will usually include the sanction of making up for lost time in the form of after school detentions.

### **The staff responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

Senior Leader  
Heads of Year  
Head of Sixth Form  
Pastoral Secretary– compiling requested attendance reports; produces fortnightly reports for the Pastoral Team  
Reception Staff  
Learning Mentors  
Learning Coach

### **MONITORING**

The schedule for monitoring and evaluating Teaching and Learning includes a monitoring cycle for attendance. This has established effective working patterns to ensure attendance and punctuality and continues to be a high priority for the school.

Monitoring is detailed and designed to establish patterns of attendance where these exist.

The monitoring cycle regularly includes the following:

- Monitoring of all students between 90% & 95% (the benchmark for expected attendance);

- Specific monitoring for all those deemed Persistent Absentees (below 85%) or who have in previous years had attendance concerns;
- Specific monitoring of the following cohorts: GAT, Pupil Premium EAL, SEN, Ethnicity, LAC, Medical.
- Specific monitoring of all those at Levels 1, 2 & 3 stages of intervention
- Attendance is discussed regularly at meetings of the Pastoral Team.

Attendance is also a regular issue discussed at SLT meetings.

Governors are given an updated report in each Head Teacher's Report. See also Appendix.

**Associated Policies:**

Inclusion  
Teaching and Learning  
Accessibility  
Special Educational Needs  
Behaviour

## MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE

### Stages of Monitoring

	<b>Pre-Level 1</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>
<b>Trigger</b>	5--11 sessions absent	12 Sessions Absent (6 days)	20 Sessions Absent (10 days)	Advised by AHT in consultation with Head of School
<b>Person Responsible</b>	Tutor Heads of Year	Head of Year	Senior Leader with overview on Attendance	Local Authority Attendance Officer
<b>Action</b>	<p>Tutor and Head of School/Year to be alerted when there is a concern over attendance.</p> <p>All action taken to be Reported to AHT</p> <p>Tutor to discuss concerns with student and ascertain the reasons for absence</p> <p>Tutor or Head of School/Year to phone home or email to discuss the matter and ascertain what support could be put in place given the specific issues which emerge.</p>	<p>If concern persists then a Level One meeting is to be arranged by telephone to discuss the pastoral support available</p> <p>Tutor to be informed of all actions</p> <p>Student and parents to be present at the Level One meeting which is held by Head of School /Year</p> <p>Students should have some form of mentoring arranged and the aim is to resolve difficulties/barriers</p> <p>Where there are longer term</p>	<p>If concern persists then a Level Two meeting will be arranged by the AHT. This will continue to focus on support available but will ensure that parents are aware of their legal responsibilities over attendance at school. The purpose of the meeting will be to ascertain the barriers to good attendance. The meeting will be arranged by telephone and will be confirmed by letter.</p> <p>Student and parents will be present at the Level Two meeting which will</p>	<p>Where concerns persist the Local Authority Attendance Officer sends out Level Three Letters and monitors student attendance, makes Home Visits, meets formally with the student and parents and undertakes completion of EHA where required</p> <p>The AHT is updated on action taken by the Local Authority Attendance Officer</p> <p>Review Meetings are held to monitor attendance targets which are set</p>

	<p>Further pastoral support through Learning Mentors, Particularly for Pupil Premium Students</p>	<p>medical issues which come to light then the student is to be placed on School Action Plus so that the student can achieve success and they can be monitored more effectively through IEPs</p> <p>Regular updates to parents by telephone or email by the Head of School, Inclusion Manager or Learning Mentors</p> <p>Heads of School/Year to liaise with AHT so that monitoring records are up to date</p>	<p>be held by the AHT along with the Local Authority Attendance Officer, with a member of the Pastoral Team</p> <p>Strategies will be put in place to encourage an improvement in attendance or to enable the student to manage their learning more effectively. The impact of attendance on academic progress will be discussed at length</p> <p>Timetable adjustments may be negotiated to enable the student to reintegrate more effectively or catch up where this is the case</p> <p>An EHA may be necessary in order to access wider external support</p> <p>The meeting will set targets for improvement</p>	<p>Professionals' Meetings have taken place where this was deemed appropriate Tutors to be made aware of Level Three arrangements</p>
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			<p>At the Level Two meeting the Local Authority Attendance Officer will advise the parents on their legal obligations</p> <p>A Review meeting will be arranged and agreed to ascertain progress. Rapid turn-around of two weeks will work best here and can be followed up by telephone and email correspondence</p> <p>Copies of Level Two proformas will be shared with Heads of School/Year who will share details with the Tutor</p>	
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## Data required

TYPE OF DATA	WHEN REQUIRED	FOR WHOM
Sims alert when student falls below 93%	When it occurs	Tutors for their Tutor Group: Tutors have Requested that their home page on SIMS shows attendance for their form Academic staff for their teaching groups AHT and Heads of School so they can monitor effectively
Report on student absences and punctuality	Weekly	Tutors & Heads of Year
100% Attendance	Half-termly	Tutors and Heads of Year
Authorised and Unauthorised absence Attendance and Punctuality by Year Group Attendance analysis by all defined groups cohort for the whole school and also in Year groups Pupil Premium analysis of those below 93% and 90% by number and % Persistent Absentee Report		AHT to continually update information for SEF