



POLICY – ATTENDANCE POLICY

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ST PAUL'S MISSION STATEMENT

United through Jesus, in faith, love and learning.

The School's Mission Statement and Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching underpin this document.

St Paul's Catholic Primary School seeks to ensure that all pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for pupils to realise their true potential.

The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges good attendance and timekeeping, and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives, St Paul's Catholic Primary School will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

AIMS

- To support families in their efforts to provide a high-quality education for their children.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors/ directors.
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.

- To analyse attendance by group (including Pupil Premium children) to ensure that attendance is high for all children.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To promote effective partnerships with the SENDCO, Pastoral Lead and with other services and agencies if appropriate.
- To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
- To provide a consistent approach to requests for a leave of absence.

PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Improving attendance is everyone's responsibility. Therefore, at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place (Working together to improve attendance- DfE 2024).

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.
- The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment (Working together to improve attendance- DfE 2024).

EXPECTATIONS

We expect that **all** pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day

We expect that **all** parents will:

- Encourage regular school attendance by supporting the values of good attendance in education, at home
- Be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day (including extra-curricular activities) and have completed any homework they have been given
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school
- Contact the school office on the first day of a child's absence, giving the reason for the absence
- Discuss with the class teacher, Phase Leaders, Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher any problems preventing their child/children from attending school
- Provide evidence, if required, where the length and frequency of absence through illness is giving cause for concern

We expect that school staff will:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, as required by current legislation
- Monitor every pupil's attendance
- Contact parents as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Be alert to early signs of disaffection or a child's worries about school which could culminate in non-attendance, and report these concerns as soon as possible to the Phase Leaders/Deputy Headteacher/Headteacher
- Encourage good attendance
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere and a safe learning environment for children
- Make initial enquiries to parents of pupils who are attending irregularly, expressing the school's concerns and clarifying the school and the local authority's expectations regarding regular school attendance
- Regularly inform parents of the % attendance of all pupils

In order for this Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff in the school must make attendance a high priority and convey this to pupils at all times. Parents should also support these views in the home, to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

SAFEGUARDING

A child not attending school is a safeguarding concern. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will regularly analyse trends and patterns in attendance to ensure that the safety and well-being of children is the priority, and the risk of emotional based school avoidance is reduced. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If we have not had communication regarding the absence, this raises safeguarding concerns regarding the well-being of both the child and parent/care giver. The school may carry out a home visit and/or make contact with relevant agencies, such as Police, 'Child Missing in Education' Team or Children's Services, to ensure the safety and well-being of both child and parent.

Children who are absent from education KCSIE 2024 para 178

We recognise that children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. Therefore, we thoroughly monitor and analyse and check children's absence; looking at poor attendance as well as patterns of non-attendance. (eg always a Friday or Monday) This is the case with all children, but particularly when the school has a safeguarding concern about a child/ family or the child is already known to the local authority's children's services. For guidance and support, we refer to 'Working together to improve school attendance' and 'department's statutory guidance: Children Missing Education.'

ABSENTEEISM (Refer to Flowchart in Appendix 1)

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

If your child is absent you must:

- contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, via absence report on Parentmail or by leaving a message on the answerphone (option 2)

If your child is absent we will:

- telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- invite you in to discuss the situation with the Phase Leader/ Deputy Headteachers/ Headteacher if absences persist
- refer the matter to the West Berkshire Education Attendance Team, if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

THIRD DAY ABSENCE

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as set down by West Berkshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family.

TEN DAYS' ABSENCE

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk or missing. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number.

CONTINUED OR ONGOING ABSENCE

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. **If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling, at 90% we will contact you to find out why.**

REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The School Attendance Regulations 2006 were amended with effect from September 2013. The key amendments relate to the granting of leave for the purpose of family holidays in term time: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (Appendix 2) from the school office in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, **the absence will be unauthorised** and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in the 'West Berkshire Code of Conduct for Issuing Penalty Notices for School Absence 2024', **parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine** or other legal action in accordance with the code. **Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.**

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **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
- **Unauthorised absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - truancy before or during the school day
 - absences which have not been explained.

- Holidays

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE (Working together to improve attendance- DfE 2024).

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

PENALTY NOTICES

County policy in respect of penalty notices will be followed:

Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

West Berkshire schools and West Berkshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. the child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
2. the child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence

NB. Please note that a session is a morning or an afternoon, therefore one school day is equal to 2 sessions.

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce West Berkshire Code of Conduct for Issuing Penalty Notices for School Absence 2024 or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from:

<https://westberkseducation.co.uk/Pages/Download/dcda73a2-5784-4611-a275-30b73085608d/PageSectionDocuments>

The Code of Conduct states that schools or West Berkshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed

- persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code O), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
2. one or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
- a holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/ carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence, the school or West Berkshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parents/carers** for each child.

NB: This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence, ie one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £160 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid, West Berkshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to West Berkshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

END OF DAY PROCEDURES

Please collect your child promptly at 3.20pm, the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. The After School Club will be used and the parent/carer billed.

APPENDIX 1

ST PAUL'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME

To be completed at least one month before the proposed leave of absence

Name of Student:	Class:
Purpose of Absence:	
Reason for Absence during term time:	
Proposed start date of absence:	Date of return to school:
Are there siblings at another West Berkshire School:	YES/NO
If so, which school is it?	

Signed: _____

(Parent/Guardian)

Date: _____

School to complete:

Number of days absence requested:	
Percentage Attendance:	
Has absence during term time been requested previously and if so, when and how many days:	
Absence is:	APPROVED/NOT APPROVED
Reason:	
Date Parent/Guardian informed of decision:	

Signed _____ (Headteacher)

Date _____

APPENDIX 2: Attendance and Punctuality

Attendance and Punctuality at St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Our target is that children attend school at least 96% of the time.
Children with attendance below 90% are considered to be 'persistent absentees'. This means that the school and the Local Authority need to work together to put in place targeted support to remove barriers.

School Leaders (including Governors) regularly monitor attendance of individuals, class and groups of pupils.

Children should stay at home if they have ...

A fever
Vomiting or diarrhoea
Flu or heavy colds
Childhood diseases such as chickenpox

Coughs, colds and Covid

If your child is unwell with something that can be passed to others, they must stay at home until they feel better.

If your child is unwell, please call the school office, send a ParentMail or email **every day** that they are unwell, giving as much detail as possible.

Unauthorised Absences

The school will not authorise absences for:

A child being tired
Day trips
Holidays
Birthdays
Visiting relatives (including overseas)
Shopping
Parent or sibling illness
Treating of headlice
Non urgent medical or dental appointments.
Exceptional leave of absence longer than the duration originally authorised

Term Time Holidays

Permission for absence for a holiday or for travelling to visit relatives will not be given


Exceptional or Special Leave

In an emergency, exceptional or special circumstances, parents or carers must make a request to the Headteacher for short periods of leave. These circumstances may include: the funeral of a close family member or a religious festival.

In making the decision, the Headteacher will consider:
The child's current attendance percentage

The child's previous year's attendance percentage

Previous applications and absences



Just 5 minutes late every day for a year = 16.25 hours of lost learning



Did you know ...

80% attendance over 5 years is the equivalent to one whole year of education lost!

Every Minute Counts!

Doors open 8.50am until 9.00am
(children are late after 9am)

Registers are taken at 9am
If your child arrives between 9am and 9.30am they are marked with a late mark, if they arrive after 9.30am they are marked as absent for the whole morning session on their attendance record

APPENDIX 3: Absence Flow Chart

