

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy 2024-2025

1. Philosophy

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School understands that pupils attending school regularly with consistently good punctuality, leads to the very best outcomes for pupils. Excellent attendance enables pupils to fulfil their God given talents and be successful. Attendance will be encouraged through effective communication between pupils, parents/carers and the school. If attendance falls below expectation, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School will use Birmingham City Council's 'Support First' attendance procedures to encourage improvements in attendance

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/29520/support_first_school_attendance_framework_and_guidance

Sacred Heart Primary Catholic School recognises that there is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement at all levels. Poor attenders are much less likely to achieve their targets and key milestones in primary education.

| Attendance % | Days/ lessons missed | Risk |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 97-100 | 5 days / 25 lessons | No concern |
| 95-96.9 | 7.5 days/ 37.5 lessons | Concern |
| 93-94.9 | 12.5 days/ 62.5 lessons | Risk of underachievement |
| 90-92.9 | 15 days/ 75 lessons | Severe risk of underachievement |
| 0-89.9 | 17.5 days/ 87.5 lessons | Extreme risk of underachievement |

2. Legal Framework:

This policy has been written taking into account the following statements from the Education Act;

1. Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 'If you are the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, you are guilty of an offence'.
2. Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996: 'If you, the parent, know that your child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fail without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend, you are guilty of an offence.'

Keeping children safe in education (2024) suggests that Children Missing from Education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education).

3. Aims of this policy:

- To safeguard the welfare of pupils
- To encourage parents/carers to take an active role in the attendance of their children.
- To promote a culture across the school which encourages excellent attendance and punctuality, which prepares pupils for life after school.
- To develop effective systems of communication between home and school
- To recognise and reward excellent and consistent attendance.
- To utilise the effective attendance practice framework to encourage excellent attendance across the school

4. 5 Our Strategy

The emphasis of our approach is on developing a school culture and climate of belonging to ensure all children can attend school and thrive.

The aims of the strategy are to:

- Increase school attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism
- Ensure attendance is well managed and the appropriate level of resources are allocated to attendance procedures
- To make informed use of attendance data to target interventions

The foundations of our attendance practice are;

- To embed an ethos in which excellent attendance is expected, developed and nurtured
- To have clear systems and processes to improve attendance
- To have a team of attendance experts working with a shared vision and core purpose
- To implement targeted intervention for key groups/ demographics, where data shows attendance is concerning
- To ensure that rewards are utilised to encourage attendance and support a culture of belonging.

5. Absence Procedures

Reporting Absences

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence. This should take place on the first day of the absence and on each subsequent day of absence. Parents should notify the school of a pupil's absence by 8.30am. Parents should call the school office and leave a message on the attendance phone line. Once notification of pupil absence has been received, the attendance lead may contact parent/carers for further information. If no notification has been received on the first day of absence, the school will contact parents to request that they contact the school to advise of the reason for the absence. The school requests that whenever possible all medical/dental appointments are made before 8.50am and after 3.15pm or during school holidays.

Punctuality

The school expects pupils to arrive to school and lessons on time. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning, but also that of others. Pupils must be on school site by **8.35am**. For Health and Safety reasons the school needs to know that a pupil is on site. Therefore, if they arrive after 8.35am pupils must sign in at the main office. If pupils arrive **after 8.35am** they will be given a late mark regardless of the reason. If persistent poor punctuality occurs, the 'Support First' attendance protocol will be followed as outlined for persistent absentees below.

Attendance and absence codes

On each occasion the register is taken the appropriate national attendance and absence code must be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admission register at the time. The codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics. The data helps schools, local authorities, and the government gain a greater understanding of the delivery of education and the level of, and reason for, absence. As set out in the DfE's guidance on 'Providing remote education', pupils who are absent from school and receiving remote education still need to be recorded as absent using the most appropriate absence code. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor pupil's engagement with remote education, but this is not formally tracked in the attendance register.

The full list of codes can be found in [Working together to improve school attendance](#) and in Appendix 1.

Organisation – Punctuality & Lateness

The Governors and staff feel that punctuality is very important. Children who are late cause disruption to the staff and other children in the class, more importantly it is embarrassing for the child and is disruptive to their education.

Once the school gates have been closed and the school bell has rung at 8.35am the children are deemed late. Pupils/Parents must then report to the Reception Office to sign their child in using the computerised InVentry system.

Punctuality is monitored at school according to local procedures. A daily check is made on punctuality by school office staff. When a child is late they are admitted through the main entrance only and their name recorded on InVentry. This information is then transferred onto the School Information Management System Bromcom and is kept on the individual pupil record.

For children where there are concerns an individual punctuality report is generated and a letter will be sent to the parents.

Following this letter if there is no improvement in punctuality a meeting will be arranged, where the school will discuss what can be done to support the family.

Following the meeting if there is still no improvement a School Punctuality Review Meeting will be arranged involving Governors.

Punctuality at the end of the day is equally important. School finishes at 3.35pm for all children. Children should be collected on time. Waiting and not knowing why parents/carers are late can cause anxiety for children especially when they see that every member of the class has been collected on time and has gone home.

Unauthorised absence

Where absence is occurring which has not been agreed by the school this will be marked as unauthorised. Definitions of unauthorised absence are:

- Truancy (including internal truancy)
- Parentally condoned absence without good reason
- Holidays in term time
- Arrival after the register has closed at 8.35am
- Absence without medical evidence following a SARM meeting.
- Leaving school early for a weekend getaway.
- Helping the family (e.g. looking after children, parent sick).
- Family occasions (e.g. meeting someone at the airport).
- Having a haircut... Going shopping for shoes, clothes, etc...
- Anything which can be avoided.

Unauthorised absences will trigger internal monitoring of attendance and may result in the 'Support First' attendance protocol being initiated.

Authorised Absence

What circumstances would normally be considered authorised?

- ✓ Illness that makes you really unable to come to school (not just having a cold or a slight headache).
- ✓ If your child keeps being ill, then he/she must see a doctor and you must bring in a medical note.
- ✓ A child with repeated patterns of illness will be referred to the School Nurse/ Doctor.
- ✓ One day for each main festival of your child's religion.
- ✓ A family crisis (e.g. a death in the family).
- ✓ One day for a very special family event (e.g. a wedding).

Persistent absence

When a pupil's attendance becomes a concern, the attendance lead will have conversations with pupils for safe and well checks. Parents will also be contacted to discuss concerns and support will be offered where appropriate. An Early Help referral will be offered and support put in place to encourage improvement in the pupils' attendance. If absence continues and thresholds are met, staged letters will be sent in line with the 5 foundations framework and parents may be invited for a SARM meeting. If this is not successful in improving attendance, referrals to the Education Legal Intervention Team will be made in accordance with the 'Support First' Attendance protocol.

Children missing from education

If a child is persistently absent without contact from parents/carers, school staff will make every effort to make contact with the child's family. If families do not respond to home visits/ phone calls and letters, a referral to the Children Missing from Education Team will be made.

If the school is concerned about the child's safety or well-being, a Designated Safeguarding Leader will contact CASS immediately and an Early Help Request Referral will be made.

Children's Advisory Support Service (CASS) on 0121 303 1888

Requesting authorised absences

Pupils will not be given authorisation to take authorised leave except in exceptional circumstances. It is very unlikely that requests for holidays or other leave will be authorised but if parents want the school to consider such a request they must mark an email to the attention of the Principal/Head of School at enquiry@sacredheart-sch.net

Long Term Absences

Schools are required to inform the Local Authority of unexplained absences longer than 2 weeks.

Parents taking their children out of school for unauthorised or unexplained absences for longer than 4 weeks may result in them being taken off the school roll. The admission committee of the school has responsibility for making this decision, taking the advice of the Principal and the Local Authority. The Local Authority must be fully informed of this action.

Dealing with attendance concerns

The Attendance registers and Data kept on the main Administrative Computer are examined regularly. If there is a frequent pattern of absence or poor punctuality, the Attendance lead will write to parents in order to ascertain the reason for persistent absence or poor punctuality. Details of attendance or percentages of late arrivals to school are extracted from the computer database. The Attendance lead will show this to the parent(s).

Where there are any concerns regarding attendance or, a letter is written to parents notifying them of concerns over attendance and the need to improve.

If attendance does not improve following this or if attendance is on or below 90%, parents are asked to meet with school leaders, in school, to discuss strategies for improvement. If appropriate, the school may refer parents to the appropriate agencies for further advice, support or actions.

Following the meeting if there is still no improvement a School Punctuality Review Meeting will be arranged involving Governors.

This school does not routinely issue fines for parents for their child's poor attendance. However, in circumstances where a child's attendance is still causing concern after the above actions, a fixed penalty notice or prosecution will be considered.

National Framework for Penalty Notices for school absence

The new regulations came into effect on 19th of August 2024.



The aim is to improve consistency in the use of penalty notices across England.

The national framework includes:

- A single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered of ten sessions (usually equivalent to five school days) for any unauthorised absence within a rolling ten school week period. The 10-week period may span different terms or school years. For example, two sessions of unauthorised absence in the summer term and a further eight during the autumn term.
- An increase to the rate of a penalty notice from £120 to £160 if paid within 28 days and £60 to £80 if paid within 21 days. If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period, the notice will be charged at the higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at £80.
- A national limit of two penalty notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another tool must be considered (such as prosecution or another attendance legal interventions).

Strategies for Maximising Attendance

Government research has shown that children's attendance relates directly to their achievements. Any attendance that is below 95% is a cause for concern. The school ask that all parents/carers aim for 100% attendance.

The school consider attendance in the following way:

- 100% Excellent
- 99% - 97% Very Good
- 96% - 95% Satisfactory
- Less than 95% Cause for concern

Individual letters and rewards are presented to pupils who have made progress in their punctuality and attendance.

Attendance and punctuality will be promoted daily in class, through assemblies and in the newsletters. Attendance is reported to Governors in the Principal's Report.

If a child's attendance level drops below 95%, the Principal /SLT will commence close monitoring of that child's attendance level. The school will send home the most recent attendance printout along with a letter of support for parents. The class teachers will speak to the children about their individual attendance and to parents at Parents' Evening to encourage the children to take ownership of their own attendance.

If it continues to drop and falls below 90%, the Attendance lead will consult with the Education Welfare Officer and letters will be sent to parents inviting them to meet with school and Education Welfare.

The Governors have agreed to work with the Education Welfare Officer/Education Legal Intervention Team and regular poor attendees will be targeted under the 'Support First' campaign. Parents will be made aware of this process via the newsletter and through individual letters to parents where attendance is a concern.

If there is still cause for concern, then legal action will be considered and may be taken as stated above. This will include:

- Penalty notices – a penalty of £60 or £120 depending on how soon payment is made. Applicable to both parents.
- Taking parents to court for unauthorised absence.
- Taking parents to court for persistent unauthorised absence.

Monitoring attendance



Roles and responsibilities.

Teachers will:

- Record attendance accurately
- Promote attendance within the class
- Provide pastoral support alongside the attendance lead where attendance becomes a concern
- Discuss attendance with members of their class individually.

Senior Leadership team will:

- Support the attendance officer with 'Support First' protocols when necessary.
- Mrs Cooper is the attendance champion in school and will work alongside all stakeholders to promote excellent attendance in school.
- Ensure that registers are completed accurately
- Be responsible for recording all attendance data and reasons for student absence
- Use 'My Child At School' APP to contact a parent/carer who has not informed the school of the non-attendance, requesting they contact the school.
- Send letters at each threshold stage of the 5 foundations of effective attendance practice framework.
- Complete Early Help referrals for families where appropriate when attendance becomes a concern
- Implement the 'Support First' attendance protocol when thresholds are met within the key stage.
- Track the attendance of pupils on reduced or part time timetables.

Designated safeguarding leads will:

- Ensure that pupils with poor attendance and/or poor punctuality are placed on the "Children with a vulnerability or safeguarding concern" list.

Parents/carers will:

- Encourage excellent attendance and punctuality with their children
- Inform the school via telephone call if their son/daughter cannot attend school and give a clear reason.
- Inform the school if their son/daughter develops a medical condition that requires a reasonable adjustment from the school. If this occurs, a meeting may take place between school and home to produce a risk assessment for pupils.

Children will:

- All children should aim to have an excellent attendance and punctuality record for which there will be appropriate rewards.
- All children are expected to be on the school site on time and ready to learn. Children are expected to be punctual to all lessons and registration.
- Children who arrive at school late must follow the correct procedures for recording their lateness and entering their lesson.
- Children who need to leave school for a medical appointment must follow the correct procedures for recording that they have permission to leave and have left the building.
- Children must not leave school without permission, 'truant'; this will be seen by the school as a Safeguarding concern as well as a Health and Safety concern.

6. Barriers to attendance



Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School recognises that there will be barriers to attendance including mental and physical illness. The school will work to offer support to pupils in these circumstances through offering internal support and referrals to external agencies.

While leaders should apply the school's policy fairly and consistently, the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance should be considered, along with the schools' obligations under the:

Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

7. Safeguarding

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies; safeguarding and child protection policy, the behaviour and rewards policy and the SEND and accessibility policy.

Appendix

1. Attendance codes will be utilised from the Department for Education found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>