

# Attendance and Punctuality Policy



## St Vincent's Catholic Primary School

### The School Mission Statement

*To love, serve and learn as Jesus shows us*

### DOCUMENT STATUS

<u>Last review and adopted:</u> February 2024	<u>Next review:</u> February 2025
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## **Statement of Intent**

At St Vincent's Catholic Primary School, we believe that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Providing a caring and welcoming learning environment and learning that is engaging and enjoyable so that children have a positive attitude, are happy, and want to attend school
- Responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils;
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2020) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- DfE (2021) 'Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities'
- DfE (2023) 'Providing remote education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions and/or health needs

## **Roles and responsibilities**

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.

- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to KCSIE when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance officer role.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.
- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
- Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Contacting school by 8.45am whenever children are unwell and unable to attend school.
- Contacting school if a situation has occurred causing their child to be late for school.
- Ensuring that children arrive at school punctually and fully prepared for the school day
  - Being late may cause a child upset or embarrassment.
  - Lateness also impacts significantly on learning – 5 minutes late every day adds up to 3 whole days of lost learning time.
- Dropping children off in person at the school office when they are late to explain why.

## **Definitions**

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Persistent absenteeism:

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

## **Arrival and departure at school**

- All children should arrive at school between **8.35am and 8.45am**.
- The register is taken twice during a day so one day counts as 2 sessions attended
- Morning registration starts at 8.45am and ends at 8.50 am.
  - If a child arrives after the registration period they will be marked in as “late” (L).
  - If a child arrives in after 9.15am this will be recorded as “late after the close of registration” (U).
- The afternoon register is taken immediately after lunchtime.
- The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

/ = Present in the morning	\ = Present in the afternoon
L = Late arrival before the register has closed	C = Authorised absence
E = Excluded but no alternative provision made	H = Authorised holiday
I = Illness	M = Medical or dental appointments
R = Religious observance	B = Off-site education activity
G = Unauthorised holiday	O = Unauthorised absence
U = Arrived after registration closed	N = Reason not yet provided
X = Not required to be in school	T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
V = Educational visit or trip	P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
D = Dual registered	Y = Exceptional circumstances

Z = Pupil not on admission register	# = When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.
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- It is essential that children arriving and leaving school with a parent / carer / agreed adult outside the normal hours are signed in or out **from the office**. The signing in / out register in the office is used in the case of an emergency or a fire drill.
- The B code (off site educational activity) should only be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school.
  - St Vincent's remains responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off site. Therefore by using the B code, we are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Arrangements must be in place whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils, so that this can be recorded on the school attendance register using the relevant absence codes below

### **Missing children**

- Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:
  - The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the headteacher immediately.
  - The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
  - A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the headteacher.
  - The following areas will be systematically searched:
    - All classrooms
    - All toilets
    - Any outbuildings
    - The school grounds
  - Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
  - If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
  - The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
  - If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
  - The missing pupil's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
  - If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
  - When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
  - Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.
- The headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

- The headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

### **Responding to absence**

- When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register.
- Parents are expected to telephone school by 8.45am on the morning of each day of absence to inform the school that their child will be absent. They are asked to state a reason. If a doctor's certificate is shared with school, then no phone call is necessary thereafter. Parents are requested to send in a written note explaining the child's absence when the child returns to school.
- The school office will endeavour to contact the parents/carers, if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence.
- If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parents/carers, in order to check on the safety of the child.
- Failure to comply with the expectations set out may result in the involvement of the Attendance Officer and further action may be taken in the form of penalty notices or legal action (as outlined below).

### **Medical appointments**

- Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

### **Term time holidays**

*'Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfill their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.'*

School Attendance: Statutory guidance and departmental advice, DFE Aug 2013

- In line with Warrington Local Authority, and the 2013 Amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, **leave for pupils during term time is not authorised under any circumstances.**
- The school recognises that taking children out of school may constitute a safeguarding risk and will make necessary enquiries, in order to be satisfied that the child is not at risk. The school may contact outside agencies in order to ensure that a visit is legitimate and safe for the child/children.
- The Head Teacher may now only grant leave in term time where the circumstances are exceptional, for example:
  - Death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil (additional to the day of the funeral)
  - Life threatening or critical illness of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
  - Parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months and medical evidence required)

**To have a holiday in term time, because the cost is cheaper, or due to work commitments, does not constitute an exceptional circumstance.**

- Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child, nor appropriate for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

- If you have exceptional circumstances, which have led you to request leave in term time for your child/ren, please complete the required form, which you can obtain from the school office or school website. The Head Teacher will then make a decision on whether or not the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is a genuine, exceptional and urgent reason for a child to be absent during term time.
- Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:
  - Immediately before and during assessment periods
  - When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
  - Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

### **Monitoring attendance and punctuality**

- The School Office Manager and Admin Assistant monitor attendance and punctuality daily.
- If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the Head teacher (attendance / CME lead) will be informed and parents/carers will be contacted to discuss concerns.
- At the end of each half term, attendance and punctuality rates are analysed by the Head Teacher:
  - Attendance below 96% will be monitored and a letter informing parents that attendance has fallen below 96%
  - Attendance below 90% (persistent absence) will result in one of the following actions:
    - Letter to parents/carers raising concern and offering support
    - Meeting with parents/carers to discuss concerns
    - Involvement of the Attendance Officer who may:
      - Contact parents / carers by telephone call / letter to raise concerns and offer support
      - Contact parents / carers to arrange a home visit and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation and potential further action
      - Recommend that that Local Authority take legal action against parents / carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for ensuring good attendance and punctuality.
  - Attendance below 50%, or which has lasted for 4 weeks, and where there is no clear plan in place will be referred to the LA CME Officer (David Sampson) for monitoring through the termly Pupils out of School Meeting.
  - Regular lateness over a period of time which remains unexplained may also result in a letter of concern, a meeting with parents or a referral to the Attendance Officer
- Where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with, it may be necessary to consider legal action. Warrington Borough Council operate a 'fast track' prosecution process to ensure better management of poor school attendance. This process involves the school, parents and our school attendance team setting time limited targets to improve attendance. If agreed targets are not met within nine weeks, it may be necessary to take legal action through the Magistrates Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Those found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £1,000.

### **Long Term Absence**

- When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up their school work.
- If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the Local Authority, so that arrangements can be made for the child's education in line with our "Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions and/or health needs" Policy.
- All medical absences must now be accompanied by medical evidence. This can be an appointment card or letter from a GP or hospital doctor.

## **Celebration of good attendance**

- Weekly class attendance is shared in celebration assembly, is on display in school and is reported on the school newsletter.
- All the children who have achieved 100% attendance in any one term will receive an excellence certificate for attendance.
- If a child has a long-term medical condition and attendance is 100% other than medical appointments linked to the long-term condition, they will also receive an excellence certificate for attendance.
- There are further certificates for any child who has 100% attendance for a whole year.
- If a child's attendance has significantly improved, this will be recognized with a certificate also.

## **Attendance targets**

- The school is set a challenging attendance target each year.
- These targets are agreed by the Head Teacher and Governing Body.
- The Headteacher will report on attendance in the termly report to the Governing Body.
- The Headteacher will also report on any children who have left the school or been removed from roll, along with reasons why. This will enable the Governing Body to monitor that reasons for leaving the school are legitimate, that they do not indicate any underlying issues with specific groups of pupils and are not an indicator of off-rolling. *(There is no legal definition of "off rolling". However, Ofsted define "off-rolling as the practice of removing a learner from the provider's roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than the learner. Off-rolling in these circumstances is a form of "gaming")*

## **Policy monitoring and review**

- It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance.
- The Governing Body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out.
- The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that the school's attendance figures are as high as they should be.
- The school will keep accurate attendance records in line with the School's Records Management Policy.
- Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class. If they become aware of an unexpected pupil absence during the course of the school day, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher, who will contact the parents or guardians.