

St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy 2026-27



At St. Bernadette's Catholic School, you will find us caring, hardworking and co-operative. We follow the ways of Jesus using our talents and gifts to make our school special. We show respect to all and welcome you.

Date reviewed	September 2026
Next review	September 2027
Attendance team	Mr Carroll / Mrs Canning / Miss Finn
Approved by	Headteacher / Governing Body

Statement of intent

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School believes that regular attendance is essential to pupils' education, wellbeing, safeguarding and sense of belonging. We have high expectations for attendance and punctuality while recognising that barriers to attendance can be complex and that some pupils will need additional support to attend regularly.

Our approach is support first. We will identify concerns early, listen to pupils and families, understand the barriers affecting attendance and work collaboratively to remove them. Where support is not successful, is not engaged with, or is not appropriate, the school will work with the local authority and use formal or legal intervention where necessary.

Attendance is everyone's responsibility. The school will take a whole-school approach, recognising the contribution made by high-quality teaching, SEND provision, safeguarding, pastoral support, behaviour, anti-bullying work, family engagement and an inclusive school culture.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Education Act 1996 and Education Act 2002;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Children Act 1989;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended;
- Department for Education, Working together to improve school attendance (statutory guidance, updated July 2026);
- Department for Education, Keeping children safe in education 2026;
- Department for Education, Children missing education; and
- Department for Education guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions and education for children with health needs who cannot attend school.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, SEND Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, Children Missing Education procedures, Equality and Diversity Policy and Accessibility Plan.

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body will:

- promote the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies;
- ensure leaders fulfil statutory attendance duties and that registers are maintained accurately;
- review attendance information regularly and provide support and challenge to leaders;
- ensure appropriate attendance training is provided; and
- ensure the school's attendance arrangements are fair, inclusive and consistent with safeguarding and equality duties.

The Headteacher will:

- have overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy;
- ensure that attendance expectations and procedures are understood by staff, pupils and parents;
- ensure the school acts early to address patterns of absence;
- ensure appropriate information is shared with the DfE and local authority; and
- authorise leave of absence and ensure legal intervention is considered in accordance with national and local requirements.

The school's attendance team is Mr Carroll, Mrs Canning and Miss Finn. Collectively, the attendance team will:

- lead the school's strategic and operational approach to attendance;
- monitor and analyse attendance and punctuality data;
- identify pupils and groups requiring support at the earliest opportunity;
- communicate with pupils and families and listen to barriers to attendance;
- coordinate appropriate attendance support and review its impact;
- work with school staff, the local authority and external agencies where appropriate;
- ensure first-day absence procedures and follow-up are completed; and
- consider escalation and formal intervention where support has not resulted in sufficient improvement.

All staff will promote good attendance, take registers accurately where required, follow attendance procedures and remain alert to changes in attendance that may indicate a safeguarding or welfare concern.

Parents and carers are expected to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually, notify school promptly of unavoidable absence, keep contact details up to date, request leave only in exceptional circumstances and engage with support offered by the school and local authority.

3. Attendance expectations and registration

Pupils are expected to attend school every day the school is open to them, arrive punctually and remain for the full school day unless there is an authorised reason for absence.

The school day begins at 8:45am. The morning register is taken at 8:45am and closes at 9:00am. Pupils arriving after the register has been taken but before it closes will be recorded as late. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be recorded using the appropriate national attendance code.

The afternoon register is taken at 1:00pm and closes at 1:10pm. The school will use the national attendance and absence codes required by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

4. Reporting and following up absence

Parents and carers should contact the school as soon as possible and before 8:30am on the first day of unexpected absence, using the school's agreed absence-reporting arrangements. They should provide the reason for absence and, where possible, the expected date of return.

Where a pupil is absent without explanation, the school will make contact with the family as soon as practicable on the first day. The school will establish the reason for absence, determine the appropriate attendance code and consider whether safeguarding action is required.

Medical evidence will not routinely be requested for ordinary illness. It may be requested where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the reason for absence or where evidence would help the school understand a complex or long-term health need and identify appropriate support.

5. Leave of absence

The Headteacher may grant leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances. Requests should be made in advance and each request will be considered individually. The school cannot grant leave retrospectively.

Family holidays during term time are not normally considered exceptional circumstances. Where leave has not been granted, absence will be recorded as unauthorised and may lead to consideration of a penalty notice in accordance with the national framework and the local authority's code of conduct.

Absence for religious observance, medical or dental appointments, regulated performances and other circumstances will be recorded using the appropriate national attendance code and in accordance with statutory requirements.

6. SEND, disability, health and other barriers to attendance

The school recognises that pupils with SEND, disabilities, physical or mental health needs, or other vulnerabilities may face additional barriers to attendance. High expectations for attendance remain, but support will be individualised and reasonable adjustments will be made where required.

Where attendance is affected, the school will work with the pupil and family to understand the barriers, consider relevant plans such as an EHCP or Individual Healthcare Plan, involve appropriate professionals where necessary and agree support that is specific, proportionate and regularly reviewed.

Support may include pastoral provision, adjustments to the school environment or routines, phased reintegration following significant absence, access to appropriate specialist support and other reasonable adjustments. Part-time timetables will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for the shortest necessary period, with a clear plan and regular review.

Where a pupil is likely to be unable to attend school for a prolonged period because of health needs, the school will work with the local authority in accordance with statutory guidance.

7. Safeguarding and children missing education

Attendance is an important safeguarding matter. Staff will be alert to unexplained, repeated or changing patterns of absence and will consider whether these indicate a welfare or safeguarding concern. Concerns will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Where a pupil's whereabouts are unknown, or a pupil fails to return following a period of absence, the school will make reasonable enquiries and work with the local authority and other agencies as required. A pupil will only be removed from the admission register for a reason permitted by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

8. Early intervention and attendance support

The school will use attendance information to identify emerging concerns before absence becomes persistent. Support will be based on the individual pupil and the barriers identified rather than attendance percentage alone.

The attendance team may:

- speak with the pupil and family to understand barriers;
- agree clear attendance actions and support;
- make regular supportive contact with families;
- coordinate support from pastoral, SEND, safeguarding or other school staff;
- seek support from external agencies or the local authority where appropriate;
- use attendance meetings, plans or contracts where these will help secure improvement; and
- review whether the support provided is having the intended impact.

9. Persistent and severe absence

A pupil is persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more.

The attendance team will prioritise pupils who are persistently or severely absent, or at risk of becoming so. The school will pay particular attention to patterns affecting vulnerable pupils and groups, including pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, children with a social worker, looked-after and previously looked-after children, young carers and pupils experiencing bullying or discrimination.

For severe absence, the school will work closely with the local authority and relevant partners to ensure that appropriate services are brought together to address barriers and safeguard the pupil.

10. Recognition and encouragement

The school will promote good attendance positively and communicate its benefits to pupils and families. Recognition will be inclusive and will not disadvantage pupils whose absence is linked to disability, significant health needs or other circumstances outside their control.

The school may recognise strong attendance, improved attendance, punctuality, perseverance and progress towards individual attendance targets. Access to curriculum entitlement, educational visits or enrichment will not be removed solely as a reward or sanction for an attendance percentage.

11. Formal and legal intervention

Formal or legal intervention will be considered where voluntary support has not been successful, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate. The school will work in accordance with the DfE's statutory attendance guidance and the local authority's code of conduct.

The national threshold for considering a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. Meeting the threshold does not automatically mean a penalty notice will be issued; the circumstances of the individual case and whether support is appropriate will be considered.

Where appropriate, a Notice to Improve may provide a final opportunity for a parent to engage with support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued.

For a first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil within a rolling three-year period, the penalty is £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within that period is £160 with no reduced rate. A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same pupil within the rolling three-year period; alternative legal action may then be considered.

Other legal interventions may include a parenting contract, Education Supervision Order, School Attendance Order or prosecution, depending on the circumstances and the powers available to the local authority.

12. Monitoring and analysing attendance

The attendance team will monitor attendance and punctuality regularly and analyse patterns over time. This will include whole-school, year-group, individual pupil and relevant pupil-group information.

Analysis may include disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, pupils with a social worker, looked-after and previously looked-after children and other groups relevant to the school's context. Leaders will consider attendance levels, persistent and severe absence, punctuality, use of attendance codes, patterns by day or period and the impact of interventions.

Attendance information will be shared with the Governing Body regularly. The school will benchmark its attendance against appropriate local and national information and use evidence to identify priorities and evaluate the impact of its attendance strategy.

13. Training

Staff will receive attendance information and training appropriate to their role. This will include the importance of attendance, accurate registration, early identification of concerns, the relationship between attendance and safeguarding, the school's support and escalation procedures and the responsibilities of staff with specific attendance functions.

14. Monitoring and review

The Headteacher and attendance team will review the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation or statutory guidance changes.

Date reviewed: September 2026

Next review: September 2027