

St Bede's School

Attendance Policy

(including children missing from education)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 We expect all children on roll at St Bede's School to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and schooling. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all.
- 1.2 The Headmaster is responsible for ensuring the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both morning and afternoon sessions.

2 Definitions

- 2.1 Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.
- 2.2 Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both school and a parent. A letter is always requested and the Headmaster may send a reply, stating that it is not normal policy for children to be absent and any time missed will have to be made up with work to be completed at home. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away without good reason, even with the support of a parent or carer.

3 If a child is absent

- 3.1 When a child is absent unexpectedly, an absence is recorded in the register, and the school office informed where the School Secretary will endeavour to contact a parent or carer.
- 3.2 When the child returns to school, a note may be brought from a parent or carer to explain the absence. If there is no parental communication then the School Secretary will call the parents and ask for the reason behind the absence.
- 3.3 A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. a medical appointment.
- 3.4 If there is any serious doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or carer, in order to check on the safety of the particular child/children.

- 3.5 The School Office staff hold the responsibility to record whether a child is absent through various activities:
- Attending an approved educational activity outside school
 - Unable to attend through exceptional circumstances
 - Taking authorised absence granted by the Headmaster
 - Taking unauthorised absence with no reason given

4 Requests for leave of absence

- 4.1 We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, to make the most progress possible. We do understand circumstances under which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend, e.g. a special event. We expect parents to contact the school at least a week in advance, but normally this request will be granted.
- 4.2 Parents do have the right to withdraw their child/children from school for up to ten days for an annual holiday. We naturally prefer, and actively encourage, parents to take family holiday in school holidays, but if this is not possible the school will usually grant that particular leave of absence.

5 Long-term absence

- 5.1 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 learning material home, so that its pupils can keep up with school work.
- 5.2 If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school may demand that suitable arrangements be made for tuition outside school.

6 Children missing from education

- 6.1 Children missing from education can mean either a child being unenrolled or a child on extended absence.
- 6.2 The school will contact the parent or carer of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school may contact Staffordshire County Council (and any other Local Authority where the child has normal residence) support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation. We have a legal duty to inform the appropriate LA if:
- A child is absent for 10 days following on from a period of approved leave
 - A child is absent for 20 consecutive days without approved leave
 - A child fails to attend school regularly
 - A child is deleted from the register when the next school is not known
- 6.3 Parents should be aware that Staffordshire County Council (and other LAs) reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their child/children to school on a regular basis.
- 6.4 With due regard for Children Missing Education (September 2016), St Bede's School will notify local authorities when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the 15 grounds listed in the regulations (Annex A). These 15 grounds continue to include:
- When the family has apparently moved away
 - When the child has been certified as medically unfit to attend
 - When the child is in custody for more than four months

- When the child has been permanently excluded
- The child has been taken out of school to be home educated

This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points and/or when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by us. When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority will include contact details as well as the reason for removal. We will also notify local authorities within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point and/or at the start of the first year of education normally provided by us.

- We will obtain written confirmation from parents/carers if and when we find out that one of our pupils is being removed to be educated outside of the school system. A copy of this will be forwarded to the appropriate Local Authority.

6.6 **Safeguarding:**

- There are significant risks for children who regularly go missing from education.
- All children, regardless of circumstance, are entitled to full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any SEN they may have.
- Procedures are in place to identify and respond to this, particularly those who are repeatedly missing or where there is an emerging pattern (see above).
- With due regard for Keeping Children Safe in Education (May/September 2016) St Bede's School acknowledges the importance of information sharing between schools and appropriate Local Authorities to help identify children missing education and help protect children from potential harm.
- A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect (including CSE, FGM, travelling to conflict zones and forced marriage) and staff must be alert to any possible signs or indicators.
- We will review information from the government's 'missing children and adults strategy' and 'children missing education' guidance when appropriate and applicable.
- Please see the Safeguarding and other relevant policies for further information.

7 Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 It is the responsibility of the Headmaster to monitor each child's overall attendance, and they will request meetings with parents if a child has been absent for longer than has been agreed. The Headmaster is also responsible for this Attendance Policy (including children missing from education), and for seeing that it is carried out.
- 7.2 St Bede's School reserves the right, and will, keep accurate attendance records for a minimum period of three years.
- 7.3 This policy will be reviewed by the SMT annually or earlier if considered necessary.

Headmaster
September 2016

Director of Studies
September 2016