



St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust

## Attendance Policy



**ST THOMAS  
MORE**  
VC ACADEMY

**Date policy produced:** March 2021  
**Produced by:** St Cuthbert's RC Academy Trust

**Date policy reviewed:** March 2022  
**Reviewed by:** St Cuthbert's RC Academy Trust

Other related academy policies that support this Attendance policy include:- Anti-bullying, Behaviour, Child Protection, Looked After Children, Special Educational Needs & Disability & Supporting Children with Medical Needs, Young Carers.

Welcome to St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust's attendance policy.

Our policy recognises that high levels of school attendance are significant to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential. It is an assumption so widely understood but insufficiently stated that children and young people need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves pupils vulnerable to falling behind and achieving less in both primary and secondary school.

The overall aim of the attendance policy is to:

- Keep children safe and ensure their welfare needs are met in accordance with safeguarding practice.
- Provide a stable environment in which our children can learn.
- Support parents/carers to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children who are of compulsory school age and registered at the academy, attend school regularly.
- Maximise educational opportunities for all our pupils, ensuring there is a consistent and fair approach with equal opportunities for all.
- Encourage good habits of school attendance with a vision on early intervention by supporting families with children in the Early Years Foundation stage.

We do this by:

- Applying a robust attendance process across all seven primary schools within the academy.
- Notifying parents/carers at the earliest opportunity where attendance is below expected national standards.
- Ensuring pupils are punctual and attend school on time.
- Working with parents/carers to reduce illness and medical absence.
- Working in collaboration with partner agencies, such as health visitors, school nurses and children's services across all levels of the needs assessment.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; which includes individual education plans.
- Identifying vulnerable children who may have a specific area of need to enable them to attend school.
- Analysis of attendance data to highlight areas of concern, particularly amongst vulnerable groups, including the identification and tracking of persistent absence pupils.
- Working with the families of children in the Early Years' Foundation Stage to ensure there is a readiness to learn.
- Highlighting the importance of attendance with pupils through achievement and rewards.

The legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, academies, head teachers, school staff, directors, pupils and parents, are contained in:

- The Education Act 1996, sections 434(1)(3)(4) & (6) and 458(4) & (5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

Further advice and guidance provided by the DfE on specific aspects of attendance is referenced in the policy.

St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and all staff who during the course of their employment have direct or indirect contact with the pupils and their families, or who have access to information about them, have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupil. This includes effective joint working practice with external agencies and professionals that have different roles and expertise and ensuring attendance practice and record keeping reflects this responsibility.

As with all aspects of a child's life, it is the parents/carers who have the pivotal role in ensuring their child's best interests are taken into consideration at all times. The law in relation to the regular attendance of a child at school is strict in the application of this responsibility. At St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust we want to support our parents/carers in

carrying out this responsibility but at the same time we will tender challenges where a child's level of attendance falls behind expectations. To this end, the policy is robust in its early identification of attendance concerns and structured to ensure the appropriate level of support is put in place.

The policy is relevant to every child on roll at a primary school within St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust, between the ages of 3 and 11 years old.

The Trust recognises that a child's learning journey starts at the very beginning of their Early Years education, this being an important time for parents/carers to embed good habits of attendance with their child, which will follow them through their school life. The parent/carer is expected to have good routines in place to ensure their child is prepared for school each day and is ready to learn by attending regularly and being in school on time. Once established, we believe the child will easily become accustomed to all school routines and will grow through their education to become an independent learner.

We also recognise that at times difficulties may arise within a family, which can impact upon a child's learning and school attendance. In such cases, it is important for a pupil or parent/carer to speak to a person within their school, who in confidence, will listen and discuss the best way forward. Each school offers a network of pastoral support. We believe in working closely with the pupils and parents/carers to ensure a child's education is not interrupted and they can continue to attend school regularly.

### **Context of the school attendance measures**

A parent/carer is responsible for ensuring their child being of compulsory school age receives a suitable full-time education and attends school regularly. This is a legal requirement.

A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn five between 1 January and 31 March, they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn five between 1 April and 31 August they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn five between 1 September and 31 December, they are of compulsory school age on 31st December.

A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

*(School Attendance August 2020 )*

### **Attendance Registers**

The law requires all schools to have an attendance register. All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on the register.

The attendance register is taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. Entries into the register must not be pre-populated. On each occasion a record is made as to whether a pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken if necessary;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the electronic register which is used to download data to the School Census.

All attendance information is kept in accordance with confidentiality and data protection practice. The main attendance register is compiled electronically using the School Information Management System (SIMS).

## School Day

**Registration Code / \:** Present in School / = am \ = pm Present in school during registration.

Morning registration will take place at the start of the school day. Afternoon registration will take place immediately after lunch.

The timings for the school day are as follows:

- Endsleigh Holy Child VC Academy from 8:50am to 3:30pm
- St Anthony's VC Academy from 8:50am to 3pm
- St Charles' VC Academy from 8:45am to 3:15pm
- St Mary Queen of Martyrs VC Academy from 8:50am to 3pm
- St Richard's VC Academy from 8:55 to 3:30pm
- St Thomas More VC Academy from 8:50am to 3pm
- St Vincent's VC Academy from 8:55am to 3:30pm

If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes. In such cases, to ensure effective safeguarding practice is in place, it is important that the pupil's details are recorded in school as being signed out by a member of staff. In the case of a primary school aged child a signature from the appropriate adult collecting the child is also required. Accordingly, where the pupil returns to the school, they should be signed back in. Reasons for signing a child out of school, in every case must be confirmed by the parent/carer. Evidence will be requested to support the reason.

## Lateness

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed.

Code U: Late arrival after the register has closed.

(Registers close 30 minutes from the beginning of registration. For statistical reasons, arrival to school after this time is recorded as an unauthorised absence and will be subject to formal attendance processes. Afternoon registration closes after the register is taken).

Regular school attendance is determined between the hours prescribed by the school. As part of a parent's/carer's responsibility to ensuring their child attends regularly at school, it is important for parent/carers to ensure their child is arriving on time to school.

St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust will not tolerate a child being late to school and reasons will be contested. The staff in all the academies strive hard to ensure each pupil within their care is taught to good and outstanding national curriculum requirements. This cannot be achieved where a child is late to school and is not ready to learn.

It is important that a child arrives to school on time. Once the school entrance is closed, the pupil will be required to sign in at the academy office, where the reason for lateness will be recorded. In the case of a primary school aged child, the expectation is for the parent/carer to accompany the child into the academy office, to record the reason for lateness.

Lateness to school can be a very upsetting and isolating experience for a child:

- Before the beginning of the school day, it is important for a child to have contact with their peers on the playground. This is one of the times during the school day where they can share quality time with their peers and are able to forge their friendships. Children who are late to school miss this opportunity and can quickly become anxious and withdrawn, lacking in self-esteem and feeling left out.

- Children who are late to school readily become identified amongst their peer group as a person who is unprepared for school and who disrupts the learning of others. This can leave the child feeling confused and unsettled, having to play catch up with their work without having had the appropriate instruction from the tutor. In turn, this may lead to the child becoming unhappy and disaffected with their learning and not wanting to come to school.
- All the business of the school day is generally given to the pupil in the registration period. Where a child is late to school, they may miss out on vital information important to their learning or participation in other school activities, such as school trips.

Persistent lateness to school may be a safeguarding factor and is therefore monitored to identify pupils who may be vulnerable for welfare reasons or identified as not making progress in their learning. The minutes late are accumulated on each occasion a child is arriving late to school. Each half term the parent/carer is notified in writing of the amount of time which their child has missed from their learning, by arriving late to school. Following receipt of a letter, the expectation is for lateness to school to improve.

### Attendance and Absence Codes

A list of all the codes and their meanings are contained in the *Pupil Registration (England) Regulations 2006*. The codes enable the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps the school, Local Authority and Ofsted to gain a greater understanding of the level and the reasons for pupil absence.

Persistent absence from school is a safeguarding factor and is monitored to identify pupils who may be vulnerable for welfare reasons or identified as not making progress in their learning.

### Monitoring Attendance

St Cuthbert’s Roman Catholic Academy Trust expects all pupils, at any one time throughout the school year, to be attaining at least 96% attendance. This equates to no more than 5 days (10 sessions) absence within the school year.

100%-99%ATTENDANCE	OUTSTANDING
98%-97% ATTENDANCE	GOOD
96%-95%ATTENDANCE	SATISFACTORY
94%-91%ATTENDANCE	INADEQUATE
90%-86% ATTENDANCE	CAUSE FOR CONCERN
85% ATTENDANCE AND BELOW	SERIOUS CONCERN

The academy adopts a robust attendance process which is a staged approach offering guidance correlating to the pupil’s overall attendance to determine the level of intervention deemed necessary. The monitoring of attendance for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), follows this process but without recourse to the staged approach.

The academy has a duty through the attendance process to advise the parent in writing, as early as possible, where their child’s attendance has fallen below expectations. To comply with legal requirements, each parent is notified in writing separately.

Where there are continuing concerns and decline in attendance, the second attendance letter highlights the need for the parent to provide proof of medical/illness absence to be provided to enable the academy to be satisfied as to the authenticity of the absence. In such cases, the academy will accept a prescription notice, medical letter, appointment card, or similar. The academy does not require the parent to provide a GP sick note, and do not expect the parent to make an additional payment, subject to prescription charges, to satisfy this requirement.

Where there is a continued decline in attendance, the academy will consider moving to formal attendance processes. In such cases, the parent will be invited to attend an attendance meeting the purpose of which is to formulate a plan to work together to improve attendance. A review meeting will be held within 4 weeks.

The attendance process is subject to fast tracking and where appropriate, formal attendance processes will be initiated without recourse to the staged approach.

**Formal Attendance Process/Legal Intervention**

As a child’s regular attendance at school is a legal requirement, subject to section 444 of the Education Act 1996, the academy has to consider if legal intervention is deemed necessary. This requires a referral to the Local Authority who has the delegated authority to arrange the issue of a summons to the parent/carer of a child who is not attending school regularly where there is evidence to support the commission of the offence.

As part of the formal attendance process, in most cases, the academy will initially work to improve school attendance through the Penalty Notice Regulations. This involves the Local Authority issuing a parent/carer with a penalty notice warning letter, requiring the parent/carer to ensure the child attends school every day for 15 consecutive school days, as stipulated in the letter, otherwise the parent may be issued with a penalty notice. By adopting this measure, it is hoped that good habits of attendance will be encouraged and further intervention is not required. Where the penalty notice warning period has been achieved, it is important that improvements to attendance are sustained.

The issuing of a penalty notice is undertaken by the Local Authority acting on the recommendation of the academy, subject to evidential requirements being satisfied. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 to be paid within 28 days. Payment is made to the Local Authority. In line with Local Authority protocol, parents/carers have right of appeal against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the Local Authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice.

In some cases, a court warning letter will be issued to parents/carers where, on the acquisition of evidence, the academy will refer the matter to the Local Authority for a summons to be issued against the parent/carer. A fine up to and not exceeding £2500 and/or 3 months’ imprisonment can occur for case convictions.

Where the matter is referred for legal proceedings, the academy may be minded to require the Magistrates to consider imposing a Parenting Order. This is not a punitive requirement but is aimed at supporting the parent/carer in giving effect to their parenting responsibilities to enable school attendance to improve.

*(School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures, March 2020 )*

**Persistent Absence**

A pupil who has 10% or more absence is classified for statistical purposes as being a ‘persistent absentee’. This is measured in sessions missed from school and could be owing to either authorised or unauthorised absence. These are pupils which the academy considers to be particularly vulnerable and in most cases will be subject to an Improved Attendance Plan, to ensure they are supported in attending school regularly.

Throughout the school year, persistent absence is calculated as follows, where 1 day equals 2 sessions:

TERM 1 7 sessions or more	TERM 1 to 2 14 sessions or more	TERM 1 to 3 20 sessions or more	TERM 1 to 4 25 sessions or more	TERM 1 to 5 31 sessions or more	TERM 1 to 6 38 sessions or more
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*(A Guide to Absence Statistics, May 2016)*

**Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absence is recorded where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Parents/carers are expected to notify the school of their child’s absence on the first day of the absence and every day thereafter. All unexplained and unexpected absences will be followed up in a timely manner, preferably within 2 days of absence. Every effort will be made to establish the reason for a pupil’s absence. When the reason for the pupil’s absence has been established the register should be amended, with the appropriate code.

The academy has a responsibility to follow up all unexplained and unexpected absence.

### **Illness (not medical or dental appointment)**

Parents/carers are advised to notify the academy as soon as possible when a child is to be absent for illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust will advise parents/carers to provide medical evidence to support illness. The academy can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied as to the authenticity of the illness and will advise parents/carers in writing of their intention to do this. In such cases, a prescription notice, medical letter, appointment card, or similar, will suffice. The school does not expect parent/carers to request medical certificates from the GP, which can incur a charge.

The academy will ensure that pupils at school with medical conditions are supported to enable them to have full access to their education. In such cases an individual healthcare plan may be initiated, in consultation with the parent/carer and pupil and relevant healthcare professional. The plan should consider the management of absence from school. It is unacceptable practice to penalise children for their attendance record if their absences are related to their medical condition, eg. hospital appointments. *(Supporting children at school with medical conditions, December 2015)*

### **Medical or Dental Appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Parents/carers are therefore encouraged to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment, returning to school immediately after the appointment.

It is important to ensure effective Health & Safety practice is in place. A pupil arriving at school after being at a medical appointment, who has not been marked present for that session, must be signed into the academy at the office. Evidence of the medical appointment will need to be produced, otherwise a child arriving into school will be recorded as late, which may be an unauthorised lateness, depending on the time of arrival into school. The academy seeks to work flexibly with parents/carers in managing medical absence, so as not to penalise children for their attendance record if their absences are related to their medical condition, eg. hospital appointments.

*(Supporting children at school with medical conditions, December 2015)*

### **Children Missing from Education**

A child who is absent from school for 10 consecutive school days without notice from home is regarded as a 'child missing from education'. As a major safeguarding concern, the Academy seeks to identify the location of a pupil through engagement with external agencies (such as but not limited to the Education Welfare Service, Police and the Immigration Service). Before doing so, the school will have made all necessary enquiries to trace the pupil, through any additional contact numbers. It is important that all absences are notified to the academy on each day of absence and a change to contact information is updated. Otherwise, a missing child could be removed from the St Thomas More VC Academy register requiring a parent/carer to re-apply for a school place.

*(Keeping Children Safe in Education, January 2021 )*

### **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

The parent/carer who has responsibility to ensure the regular attendance of their child at school, should make application to the Head of School of the academy where their child is on roll, for any leave of absence in term time. Using the appropriate application form, the request should be made providing at least one month's notice. A separate application is required to be completed for each child. Leave of absence in term time is not a parental right.

The application form and the Leave of Absence in Term Time policy is downloadable from the website for each academy.

Heads of School will not grant leave of absence in term time. However, there may be exceptional circumstances, for granting leave of absence in term time, which will be determined by the Head of School.

The exceptional circumstance criteria will focus on:

- arrangements for access determined by a Court Order
- Service personnel and other employees where annual leave is dictated by an employer
- acute family crisis
- religious observance

Each parent will be informed in writing within 10 school days of the application being received.

Where the decision is made not to grant leave of absence in term time and the leave is taken without prior approval, or without application, each parent will be informed in writing of the decision to refer the matter to the local authority.

Where this is the case, the matter will be referred to the Local Authority for consideration of the issue of a penalty notice. In doing so, St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust adheres to the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Practice in making the recommendation for the issue of penalty notices. A penalty notice may be issued to each parent/carer in respect of each child who has been absent. Further information on the code of practice can be found at: <http://www.hull.gov.uk/resident/schools-and-learning/school-attendance-and-absence>

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 to be paid within 28 days. Payment is made to the Local Authority. In line with Local Authority protocols, parents/carers have the right of appeal against a penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period, the Local Authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice.

To enhance safeguarding practice, the Trust requires an application for any leave of absence in term time to be completed (with the exception of medical absences). This includes where a child is participating in a sporting activity, performance, or where the absence is for religious observance. In such cases, the academy will make enquiry as to the safeguarding arrangements of any external provider, before agreeing to the absence. Evidence will be requested to support an application.

St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust ensures there is a consistent approach from all the academies within the Trust in determining exceptional circumstances or considering absences for other reasons. By adopting a universal approach, fairness and proportionality is assured in applying the policy.

### **Travelling children**

Where a child is to be absent from school to travel in the course of a parent's business, written confirmation is required from the parent giving details of the duration of the period of absence and the expected date of return. With this information, for short periods of absence, the academy will consider authorising the absence. Where this information is not provided and the period of absence is in excess of 20 school days, the academy will remove the child from the academy roll.

Whilst travelling, ideally the child should be registered at another school. This will ensure that a child's learning continues. In such cases, the child will remain on the academy roll as a dual registered pupil. If required, the academy can help the parent/carer to identify a school in another area.

### **Alternative Provision**

The academy is responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Where this is the case, the academy will have reciprocal arrangements in place with the alternative provider, to provide attendance information. Where possible, this should be provided daily, at the least weekly. All unexplained and unexpected absences are to be followed up in a timely manner. The academy is expected to make challenges to an external provider which is not providing attendance information or following up absences. Each academy office will have an Alternative Provision folder to collate correspondence with the external provider.

Pupils may be present at an off-site activity which has been approved by the school. The appropriate code (B) is used in such cases and in using this code the academy is certifying the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard children. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work.

A pupil may be dual registered at more than one school. Where this is the case, the appropriate code (D) is used to indicate the pupil was not expected to attend the session as they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school.

### **Rewarding Attendance**

Each academy within the Trust has incentives for encouraging pupils to attend school regularly. These include raising points for achieving good attendance which collectively contribute to House/Group attendance cups. It is important that all pupils are given the opportunity to contribute to this success by attending school regularly.



## Every Day Counts

As few as 19 missed days over the school year reduces a child's chances of success. Their SAT or GCSE results could drop by one grade across all subjects.

Education is important to all children regardless of ability. It builds a child's resilience and offers a safe and nurturing environment in which a child can learn lots of exciting new skills and knowledge every day, as well as learning to work with others and forging friendships which will support them through their childhood, with some friendships lasting well into adulthood.

Being organised the night before with appropriate bedtimes is an important and common sense approach to ensuring a child attends school and is ready to learn. Once established, this is a habit which will follow them through life.

Attendance in the latter years of a child's education can significantly impact on their opportunities when leaving school, with further education providers and prospective employers requiring references, for which the academy is legally bound to provide an honest and accurate account.