Federation of St Charles and St Mary's Catholic Primary Schools

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

This policy was reviewed by the Governing Body: Autumn 2026
Date policy to be reviewed: Autumn 2027

The School Governors Federation Ethos Statement

As Governors we acknowledge our responsibilities as strategic leaders to ensure every child, in St Charles' and St Mary's Schools, are given the best possible opportunities to reach their full potential, spiritually and academically. We do this by promoting high standards of educational achievement, pastoral care and by modelling of the values proclaimed in the Gospel in both communities.

We are strongly committed to building and strengthening the shared Catholic ethos of both schools whilst maintaining their individual identities.

We strive to build on the values started at home and seek to provide an environment where beliefs and the ethos of the Catholic faith are taught, explored, developed and nurtured. We aim for all our children to believe in their own potential, in an environment where they can flourish, succeed and achieve.

As a governing body we have a strong focus on three core strategic functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction which aim to deliver high expectations and to improve the lives and outcomes of all students.
- Holding the Executive Head Teacher and both Heads of School, to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and for ensuring excellent quality of teaching.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

As governors, we bring a wide variety of experience and expertise to the schools, and this ensures that both schools move forward and standards are constantly raised in a way that is in line with the overarching ethos and vision of the schools, along with the statutory directives from the Department for Education and The Archdiocese of Westminster.

Federation Motto:

Together in faith, we love and learn

Mission Statement

The Federation of St Charles and St Mary's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing a high-quality Catholic education rooted in Gospel values. Our schools work together to ensure that every child is supported to achieve their full potential academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

This policy applies to both schools within the Federation.

Aim of the Attendance Policy:

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our schools are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy, we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all pupils, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the schools.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that all parents and carers understand the legal framework for attendance in schools.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception age children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Local Authority Early Help Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

Working together to improve attendance

To successfully achieve good attendance and remove any barriers to attendance, it is important for schools, home and local authorities to work together in a supportive partnership.

The schools understand there may be barriers to some pupils attending regularly and that these can be complex. The schools will work with parents to remove these and to facilitate support. However, when formal support is not successful, or when parents do not engage with the schools over poor attendance, the schools are required to formalise support (which might involve the local authority partners) or to enforce statutory interventions such as penalty notices to protect the pupil's right to education.

Types of Absence

Pupils are expected to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for absence. There are two main categories of absence:

- Authorised Absence: when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence;
- Unauthorised Absence: when the school has not received a satisfactory reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a request for a parent/carer.

Expectations & Responsibility of the School

It is the School's responsibility:

- To promote good attendance and punctuality.
- To build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- To communicate clearly the attendance and punctuality procedures and policies of the school to all families.
- To maintain appropriate attendance and punctuality data and have appropriate registration processes in place which are consistently administered.
- To ensure registers are taken twice a day: at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.

- To follow up absences and lateness if parent/carers have not communicated reasons to the school.
- To inform parent/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absences.
- To monitor attendance and punctuality at least termly and inform parents via letters and meetings where this fall below expected standards.
- To liaise with Early Help and other outside organisations where a child's attendance is causing concern and support their work with families.
- To share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is a risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- To report attendance and punctuality data to the Governing Body and explain steps taken to improve both measures.

Expectations & Responsibility of Parents/Carers

The law requires that children of compulsory age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full time education whether in a school setting or otherwise. Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parent/carers have a duty to:

> *'cause (the child) to receive full time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he or she may have.'*

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will affect their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Punctuality

Punctuality is crucial. Arriving late to school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To ensure that their children arrive at school on time. Each school within the Federation operates its own published start-of-day arrangements and parents/carers are expected to ensure that their child arrives in accordance with the procedures and timings set by their child's school.
- Registration takes place at 9.00 am and pupils who arrive after 9.00am will be recorded as late to school.

- Registers close at 9.30 am and after this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Persistent lateness by a pupil will be dealt with initially between home and school but may be referred to the LA Attendance Team.
- Pupil's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.
- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil.

Absences

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To notify the relevant school office before 9.00am on the first day of absence. Parents/carers should provide the reason for absence and the expected date of return. Parents may contact the school using the communication methods published by their child's school.
- To provide medical evidence, when requested, on the child's return to school.
- To ensure siblings of any child who is absent are in school. Any absence for siblings will be unauthorised.
- To ensure that as far as possible, medical appointments are arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before/after the appointment.
- To avoid removing children for parent/carers' own appointments.
- To make alternative arrangements for dropping off or collecting their child if they are unable to bring them to school. Where this does not happen, the absence will be unauthorised.
- To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick parent/carer.
- Parents/carers of children for whom we do not know the reason for absence will be contacted after 9:30am.

Illness/Medical absences

In addition to the points above, if a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request medical evidence for further absences. This can take the form of a GP appointment card, a consultant letter, a copy of a prescription etc.

The school will automatically request medical evidence for any illness absence taken immediately before or after a school holiday.

Procedures for Exceptional Leave

Parents/carers are expected to take their children on holiday during the school holidays to minimise the impact of missing education. Any absence during term time impacts on the child's education and progress. The school is not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and are to consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making a decision.

There are 190 school days (380 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 calendar weeks. Parents should ensure that their holidays are taken during this period. The school holiday dates are published on our school website and leave of absence **will not** be authorised during term time (except in the circumstances outlined below). INSET days are published as soon as the school has agreed these but may be subject to change.

If there are exceptional circumstances as to why a child needs to be absent during term time, parents/carers must complete a **leave of absence request form in advance of the trip (at least two weeks prior)**. The school will consider these requests on a case-by-case basis, and they will use their discretion whilst applying government recommendations. Parents/carers should not assume that requests will be authorised and, therefore, flights and other arrangements should not be booked until the leave has been agreed.
It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To obtain a leave of absence form from the school office.
- To complete and submit the form in advance of the period of absence (ideally two weeks prior).

If parents/carers decide to take a holiday without the school's authorisation, the child's absences will be marked as unauthorised. **Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued by the Local Authority for unauthorised holiday absence during term time. This fine is payable at £80 per child, per parent.**

Unauthorised Absence – More formal support

If a pupil has 10 sessions unauthorised absence within a 10-week period, the pupil's parents or carers will receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification via email or letter. Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon) so 10 sessions equates to 5 days. Unauthorised absences include:

- Unauthorised absence (where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place)
- Arriving late after the register has closed,
- Holidays taken during term time,
- Any combination of these.

The 10 weeks can span different terms, different academic years and even different school settings. For instance, if your child misses 3 days of school for a holiday in September (6 sessions) and is late after the register closes on 4 occasions (4 sessions) between September and October, a parent can be issued a 'Notice to Improve' notification. Local authority partners such as the statutory attendance officer may also become involved.

The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations that will help to improve attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences in 3 months'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may be issued by the local authority to each parent/carer responsible for the child. For unauthorised holiday-related absence that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, Penalty Notice can be issued without a 'Notice to Improve' notification being issued. Also any unauthorised absences of 10% or more will be referred to Early Help.

Unexplained Absence

When a child is repeatedly absent and no satisfactory reason is given, the parent/carers will be investigated and may be liable for prosecution and/or a fine from the Local Authority.

Regular attendance monitoring is carried out by the school. Children who have repeated unauthorised absences, holidays or otherwise, will be contacted by Early Help following a referral by the school and may be invited into an attendance meeting to discuss absences and any appropriate support.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices can be issued when parents take children on term-time holidays and when notices to improve have not resulted in improved attendance.

A maximum of two penalty notices within a rolling three-year period. The details are as follows:

- First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued, the amount will be £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.
- Second offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.
- Third offence and any further offences (within 3 years) - the third time an offence is committed, a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates' Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Procedures for Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

The Federation Attendance Team, including the Executive Headteacher, Heads of School, Attendance Leads and designated administrative staff, meet regularly to identify pupils whose attendance is below the threshold and less than 90% as well as children who have been late or absent more than 10 times in a 10-week period.

- Parent/Carers of children with attendance below 85% will be asked to attend a meeting with representatives from the Attendance team. An Attendance Contract will be agreed to monitor and improve the pupil's attendance. A referral to Early Help may also be made.
- Parent/Carers of children with attendance less than 90% will receive a monitoring letter and may also be asked to a meeting depending on circumstances and evidence received from parents.
- Parents/Carers for those children with attendance at 90%-95% may receive a letter and may also be asked to a meeting depending on circumstance and evidence received from parents.
- If attendance does not improve, a 'Notice to Improve' will be issued.
- If attendance still does not improve, a referral will be made to the Local Authority and fines will be issued.

Role of the Early Help Service & Local Authority

- To investigate absence that exceeds more than 10%, and to hold meetings with these parents as required.
- To investigate any unexplained absence which exceeds more than 15 consecutive days.
- To ensure parents are aware of their legal duty under the Education Act to ensure their children attend school.
- To refer cases to the Local Authority for prosecution where persistent absenteeism has not improved despite thorough intervention and support from the school and Early Help Practitioner.
- To report accurate whole school and individual attendance data when required.

Children Missing in Education

If a child is absent (unexplained) for at least consecutive days, the family will be referred as a CME case for the Local Authority.

Persistent Latecomers

Children who repeatedly attend school late after 9:00 am will be brought to the attention of the Head of School. Warning letters will be issued to the parents/carers of these children.

Parents/carers should note that children who arrive late after 9:30 am are given a 'U' code, which is the equivalent of an unauthorised absence and this will affect the child's attendance figures. A Notice to improve or a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued to parents/carers whose child has 10 sessions unauthorised absence within a 10-week period.

Promoting Good Attendance

Good attendance is celebrated across both schools within the Federation:

- By sharing % attendance on the weekly newsletter
- By awarding classes in FS / KS1 / KS2 who achieve the highest attendance at weekly assemblies
- By awarding individual children who demonstrate improving attendance
- By awarding individual children who get 100% attendance for the whole academic year (September to July)
- By rewarding the 100% A & P with special events (3 term per school calendar year).

Leaving During the School Day

During school hours the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where the pupils are during the school day.

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school.
- Parents are requested to **confirm in writing,** by letter or email, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time.
- Pupils must be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return.
- Where a pupil is being collected from the school, parents are to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site.
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents will be contacted. *Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupils as a missing person.*

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school that they inform the relevant school within the Federation as soon as possible.

A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- A new home address if appropriate

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the local authority Tracking Officer and Education Welfare.