

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy



***“With God’s Love we are a family:
Caring, Learning and Growing together”***

	Name of School	St John Fisher Catholic Primary
	Policy Review Date	November 2026
	Date of Next Review	November 2028
	Who reviewed this policy?	Head Teacher and Governors

Contents

Working together to improve attendance.....	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Aims	3
3. Legislation and guidance	3
4. Roles and responsibilities	4
5. Recording attendance.....	5
6. Authorised and unauthorised absence	6
7. Strategies for promoting attendance	8
8. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school	8
9. Attendance monitoring.....	9
10. Monitoring arrangements.....	10
11. Links with other policies.....	10
Appendix 1: Attendance Codes	11

Working together to improve attendance

Expect

We expect high standards of attendance and punctuality from all pupils and parents/carers. We will build a culture where pupils want to be in school, are ready to learn and understand the value of regular attendance.

Monitor

We will use attendance and punctuality data rigorously to identify patterns of absence at individual, group and whole-school level as early as possible.

Listen and understand

When a pattern of absence or lateness is identified, we will listen to pupils and parents/carers to understand barriers and agree how the school, family and other partners can work together.

Facilitate support

We will remove barriers within school and help pupils and families access appropriate support outside school, including early help and wider services where appropriate.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or is not being engaged with, we will explain expectations and consequences clearly and may formalise support through an attendance contract or other appropriate intervention.

Enforce

Where support has been unsuccessful or not engaged with, statutory intervention may be considered in line with the national framework and Halton's local procedures. Legal action is a last resort at St John Fisher, but regular attendance is a legal responsibility.

1. Introduction

The Governors and staff at St John Fisher Catholic Primary are united in their belief that regular school attendance is essential to enabling children to access the education, relationships and wider opportunities available to them. Good attendance supports learning, wellbeing, belonging, confidence and safeguarding.

We recognise that absence is often a symptom of wider issues. We will work with pupils and families to understand barriers to attendance and provide the right support at the right time. Our approach is child-centred, supportive and proportionate, while recognising the legal responsibility of parents/carers to secure regular attendance.

The school has a whole-school attendance target of 96%. This is an aspiration for the school community and does not replace the need to consider each pupil's individual circumstances.

The designated senior leader for attendance and attendance staff will monitor attendance and punctuality, celebrate improvement and success, identify concerns early and work with families and partner agencies where appropriate. Where attendance concerns persist or families do not engage with support, the school will follow its graduated approach and the statutory attendance framework.

2. Aims

- set high expectations for attendance and punctuality for all pupils;
- promote the benefits of regular attendance, belonging and being ready to learn;
- reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- identify and address attendance concerns as early as possible;
- build strong, respectful relationships with pupils and families and listen to barriers to attendance;
- provide or facilitate appropriate support before considering statutory enforcement, wherever possible;
- work effectively with the local authority and other partners; and
- ensure attendance practice is inclusive and takes account of individual needs, including SEND, disability, medical needs and safeguarding concerns.

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy has regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance, as updated July 2026, and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The statutory guidance sets out the responsibilities of schools, governing bodies, parents/carers and local authorities and the support-first approach to improving attendance.

□ cite □ turn0search0 □ turn0search10 □

The policy also has regard to:

- Education Act 1996;
- Education Act 2002;
- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Children Missing Education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools;

relevant guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions and mental health-related barriers to attendance; and

Halton Borough Council's current attendance and Education Welfare procedures.

KCSIE 2026 identifies changes in attendance as a possible safeguarding indicator and requires staff to act on safeguarding concerns without delay.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Governing Board

set high expectations for attendance across the school;
hold school leaders to account for implementation of this policy and the school's attendance strategy;
ensure attendance is recorded accurately and required information is shared with the DfE and local authority;
regularly review and challenge attendance data, including persistent and severe absence and relevant pupil groups;
ensure attendance processes are delivered effectively and resources are prioritised for pupils who need additional support;
ensure staff receive appropriate attendance training; and
support leaders in developing an attendance improvement plan where required.

4.2 The Headteacher

implement this policy and oversee the school's attendance strategy;
monitor whole-school and individual attendance data and report to governors;
support staff in monitoring and improving attendance;
ensure attendance concerns are addressed through a graduated, support-first approach;
work with the local authority Education Welfare Service and other partners where appropriate;
consider and authorise requests for leave of absence in line with the law and this policy;
ensure required notifications are made to the local authority, including relevant admissions, removals, elective home education, children missing education, exclusions, part-time timetables and significant health-related absence; and
ensure the school communicates high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers.

4.3 Designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Catherine Smith. She leads, champions and coordinates attendance improvement across the school.

maintain oversight of attendance data and analysis;
identify pupils and cohorts requiring additional support;
establish and monitor systems for tackling absence and lateness;
liaise with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies;
develop attendance or reintegration plans where appropriate;
deliver or coordinate targeted interventions; and
work with the Headteacher, safeguarding team, SENDCo, class teachers and local authority where barriers to attendance require a coordinated response.

Contact: pastoral.stjohnfisher@haltonlearning.net

4.4 Attendance Officer

monitor and analyse attendance data;
provide regular attendance information to school leaders and staff;
identify patterns and pupils requiring follow-up;
work with the Education Welfare Service where appropriate; and
advise the Headteacher/attendance lead when legal intervention may need to be considered.

The school's attendance officer is Jackie Burke, through Halton Education Welfare Service.

4.5 Class teachers

record attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions using the correct national codes; ensure attendance information is submitted promptly in accordance with school procedures; and raise concerns about attendance or punctuality with the attendance lead or safeguarding team where appropriate.

4.6 School office

receive and record absence notifications from parents/carers; follow up unexplained absence in line with school procedures; ensure attendance information is updated accurately; and refer attendance concerns to the Headteacher/attendance lead where additional support is required.

4.7 Parents and carers

For the purposes of this policy, parent/carer includes anyone with parental responsibility and anyone who has day-to-day care of the child.

ensure their child attends school every day and arrives on time; notify the school promptly of any absence and give the reason; provide more than one emergency contact wherever possible; arrange medical and dental appointments outside school hours where possible; provide appropriate information or evidence where requested reasonably by the school; engage with support offered by the school or local authority; comply with any attendance agreement or other formal plan; and contact the school if they need help with barriers affecting attendance.

Parents/carers can contact the school on 0151 424 7794 or pastoral.stjohnfisher@haltonlearning.net.

4.8 Pupils

attend school every day unless they have a reason authorised in accordance with this policy and the law; arrive on time, ready to learn; and speak to a trusted adult if something is making attendance difficult.

5. Recording attendance

5.1 Attendance register

The school uses an electronic attendance register. Attendance is recorded at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session using the national attendance and absence codes in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

The school will record whether each pupil is present, attending an approved off-site educational activity, absent, or unable to attend because of exceptional circumstances, using the appropriate national code.

Any amendment to the register will preserve the original entry and record the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and position of the person making the amendment.

Attendance register entries will be retained for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day currently starts at 8:45am and ends at 3:15pm. The morning register is taken at 8:50am and the afternoon register at 1:10pm. The school will follow the statutory requirements for opening and closing the register and its published punctuality arrangements.

Important school-specific point to confirm: the previous version states that the morning register remains open until 9:15am. This should be checked against the school's actual current registration arrangements

before publication of this policy. The statutory guidance requires schools to keep the register open for a reasonable period, as set out in the school's attendance arrangements.

5.2 Unplanned absence

Parents/carers should notify the school of an unplanned absence on the first day of absence, preferably before 9:00am and as soon as reasonably practicable, using the school's normal absence reporting route. The school may contact parents/carers where an absence is unexplained.

Where a pupil is absent due to illness, the school will normally record this as authorised. The school may request reasonable medical evidence where there is a genuine concern about the reason for absence, particularly where absence is prolonged or there is a pattern of absence. Evidence will not be requested routinely or unnecessarily.

Where there are safeguarding concerns, absence will be followed up in line with the school's safeguarding procedures and KCSIE 2026.

5.3 Planned absence

Medical and dental appointments will normally be authorised where the school is informed in advance and the absence is for the minimum time necessary. Parents/carers are encouraged to arrange appointments outside school hours wherever possible.

All other requests for leave of absence must be made in advance and will be considered in accordance with section 6.

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

Punctuality is an important part of good attendance. Pupils should arrive in school in time to be settled and ready to learn.

A pupil arriving after the register has opened but before 9:05am will be recorded using the appropriate late code. A pupil arriving after the morning register has closed at 9:05am will be recorded using the appropriate absence code for that session. Where the reason for arriving after registration has closed does not meet the criteria for an authorised absence, the session will be recorded as unauthorised absence (U code).

Where a pupil is repeatedly late, the school will contact parents/carers to understand the reason, offer support where appropriate and take further action if lateness persists.

5.5 Following up unexplained absence

- contact parents/carers on the first day of unexplained absence;
- make further contact where absence continues without explanation;
- consider safeguarding risks and follow safeguarding procedures where necessary;
- establish the reason for absence and apply the correct attendance code;
- offer support where barriers to attendance are identified;
- consider wider partner involvement where appropriate; and
- where support is unsuccessful or not engaged with, consider statutory intervention in line with section 6.

The school will make reasonable efforts to establish the reason for absence promptly and will not allow unexplained absence to continue without appropriate follow-up.

5.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will provide parents/carers with regular information about their child's attendance and absence. This may include attendance information in reports, letters, meetings, the school app and other appropriate communications.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

6.1 Approval for term-time leave

The Headteacher may grant leave of absence only where the circumstances meet the requirements of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion and the length of any authorised absence will be decided according to the circumstances.

Exceptional circumstances may include, but are not limited to, significant family bereavement or religious observance. The list cannot be exhaustive and each request will be considered individually.

Family holidays during term time will not normally be authorised. Parents/carers should not assume that a holiday will be approved.

Requests should be made as early as possible and, where possible, at least four weeks before the proposed absence. The school may request relevant evidence to support a request.

The school will not grant leave of absence for protest activity during school hours.

- regulated performances or regulated employment abroad, where the statutory conditions are met;

- temporary, time-limited part-time timetables, where the statutory requirements are met; and
- exceptional circumstances.

Other authorised absence includes illness, medical or dental appointments, religious observance, relevant occupational travelling arrangements, and absence due to suspension/exclusion where no alternative provision is made, using the correct national codes.

6.2 Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and needs. A temporary part-time timetable will only be used in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests and as part of a wider support, health or reintegration plan.

- be agreed with the parent/carer;
- have clear objectives and regular review dates;
- have a proposed end date and an expectation that the pupil will return to full-time education;
- be recorded using the appropriate attendance code;
- include the pupil in reviews where appropriate;
- keep social workers informed where relevant; and
- be discussed with the local authority where the pupil has an EHC plan.

A part-time timetable will not be used as a behaviour management measure.

6.3 Sanctions and statutory intervention

The school will use a graduated approach. Support will normally be considered before statutory enforcement, while recognising that legal intervention may be necessary where attendance does not improve or support is not engaged with.

Possible statutory interventions include Notices to Improve, Penalty Notices and prosecution through the local authority, as appropriate.

6.4 Penalty Notices

Under the national framework, a school must consider a Penalty Notice when a pupil reaches 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school must consider each individual case, including whether support is appropriate, whether a Penalty Notice is the best available tool and whether another legal intervention is more appropriate. [cite turn0search10](#)

The threshold can be met through any combination of unauthorised absence, including term-time holidays and arriving after the register has closed, and the period can span terms or school years.

[cite turn0search34](#)

Before issuing or requesting a Penalty Notice, the school will consider the individual circumstances and its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The current national Penalty Notice rates are £80 if paid within 21 days and £160 if paid within 28 days for a first notice. A second notice for the same parent/carer and child within the relevant three-year period is £160 within 28 days. A third notice cannot be issued to the same parent/carer for the same child within three years of the first notice; alternative legal action may be considered where the threshold is met again.

Penalty Notices are issued and administered through the local authority in accordance with its current code of conduct.

6.5 Notices to Improve

Where the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but has not worked or has not been engaged with, the school may use a Notice to Improve as a final opportunity to engage with support before a Penalty Notice is issued.

Any Notice to Improve will follow the current Halton local code of conduct and will set out the attendance concern, support already offered, further support available, expected improvement and the timescale for improvement.

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

At St John Fisher we aim to make attendance a positive part of school culture. We will:

- celebrate good and improved attendance;
- provide certificates or other recognition for pupils who demonstrate strong or improved attendance;
- share class and whole-school attendance information through the weekly newsletter where appropriate;
- recognise classes achieving excellent attendance;
- communicate the school's 96% attendance target and the benefits of regular attendance to pupils and families;
- promote punctuality and being ready to learn;
- ensure attendance is discussed positively and sensitively; and
- avoid approaches that publicly shame or humiliate pupils or families.

8. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

8.1 Pupils experiencing complex barriers

The school recognises that poor attendance may indicate difficulties in a child's life or lived experience. Barriers may arise at home, in school or in the wider community. Families are encouraged to tell the school about circumstances that may affect attendance or behaviour, including bereavement, separation, domestic abuse, housing difficulties, caring responsibilities or other significant changes.

Attendance concerns will be considered alongside safeguarding information. Any safeguarding concern will be reported to the DSL or deputy without delay in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and KCSIE 2026. [cite](#) [turn0search6](#)

8.2 Mental or physical ill health and SEND

Some pupils require additional support to achieve good attendance, including pupils with SEND, medical needs, mental health difficulties, EHC plans or other vulnerabilities. Support will be individualised and proportionate.

Where attendance barriers relate to a pupil's SEND or EHC plan, the school will work with parents/carers and relevant professionals and communicate with the local authority where required.

Where a pupil's attendance is affected by anxiety, emotional needs or mental health, the school will consider appropriate pastoral, wellbeing, SEND and external support alongside attendance intervention.

8.3 Returning after lengthy or unavoidable absence

- maintain appropriate contact with the pupil and family during absence;
- consider access to learning during absence where appropriate and feasible;
- plan a supportive return to school that promotes safety, belonging and confidence;
- identify and address any barriers that may affect reintegration;
- provide academic, physical or emotional support appropriate to the pupil's needs; and
- review the support plan with the pupil and family.

9. Attendance monitoring

9.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence, including punctuality, regularly at whole-school, year-group, cohort and individual-pupil level. Attendance will be reviewed weekly, half-termly, termly and annually as appropriate.

The school will benchmark attendance against local and national data and use the information to identify areas for improvement. DfE attendance data and the current statutory guidance will be used when reviewing performance. [cite](#) [turn0search0](#) [turn0search7](#)

9.2 Analysing attendance

- identify pupils, groups and cohorts requiring additional support;
- identify emerging patterns before absence becomes entrenched;
- analyse persistent and severe absence;
- consider the reasons and barriers behind attendance patterns;
- consider the attendance of vulnerable groups, including pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with safeguarding concerns; and
- evaluate whether interventions are improving attendance.

9.3 Using data to improve attendance

- develop targeted actions for pupils and cohorts where attendance is a concern;
- provide regular attendance information to class teachers, school leaders, the SENDCo, DSL and governing board as appropriate;
- work with pupils and families to understand barriers;
- work collaboratively with the local authority and other partners where a multi-agency response is needed; and
- review and adapt interventions according to their impact.

9.4 Persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of their possible sessions. Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of their possible sessions.

The school will prioritise early intervention and support for pupils at risk of becoming persistently or severely absent. This will include:

- regular review of attendance data;
- contact and meetings with parents/carers;
- listening to and identifying barriers;
- clear attendance expectations and improvement goals;
- support and signposting to appropriate services;
- consideration of safeguarding concerns;
- regular review of any attendance plan; and
- statutory intervention where appropriate and proportionate.

The school may use an individual attendance target as part of a support or improvement plan. Where attendance falls below 90%, the school may place the pupil on a more formal attendance monitoring plan

and require evidence or further information where reasonable. Any target will be individualised and will not override the statutory requirement to code absence accurately.

9.5 Targeting Support Meetings

The school will work with Halton Borough Council's Education Welfare Service through Targeting Support Meetings and other agreed arrangements. These meetings provide an opportunity to identify pupils requiring coordinated support, agree actions and determine which agency is best placed to lead where barriers extend beyond the school.

The school will prioritise cases where there are out-of-school barriers, severe or persistent absence, or a need for joint action. This reflects the statutory support-first approach. □ cite □ turn 0 search 0 □

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed at least annually by the Headteacher and Attendance Lead, and sooner where there are changes to legislation, DfE guidance, local authority procedures or school attendance arrangements. Each review will be approved by the Governing Board.

The school will monitor the effectiveness of its attendance strategy using attendance data, pupil and family feedback, intervention outcomes and relevant local and national benchmarks.

11. Links with other policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
Behaviour Policy;
Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy;
Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy;
Children Missing Education procedures;
Exclusions/Suspensions Policy; and
Remote Education Policy, where applicable.

Key external guidance

Department for Education – Working together to improve school attendance (updated 9 July 2026):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Department for Education – Keeping children safe in education 2026:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Department for Education – Children missing education:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

The school will refer to the current DfE guidance and Halton local procedures if attendance legislation, codes or local arrangements change.

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The school will use the current DfE national attendance and absence codes in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The table below provides the attendance codes used by the school.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent/carers travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent/carers(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access

Code	Definition	Scenario
		arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays