



# Attendance and Punctuality

Revised: June 2020



## Why being present and on time really matters

Many pupils at Cardinal Allen High School have an outstanding attendance record. Excellent attendance and excellent timekeeping are signs of strength of character and reliability. These personal attributes are hugely valued in the world of work. They are essential if you want promotion and a successful future career.

### Your future. . .

Your attitude towards regular school attendance and being on time for your lessons will shape your future prospects *just as much as any academic success*. Whatever employment you go into you will be asked about your attendance record. When you go for a new job your previous employers will be contacted and asked to comment on your attendance and timekeeping. In whatever career you follow, from bricklaying to brain surgery, your employers will monitor your attendance and punctuality. Good employers treat illness and unavoidable lateness sympathetically, but they'll quickly identify patterns of absence and see through weak excuses. Employers do not promote poor timekeepers or people who "throw sickies" - they want people who they know will be present and on time – ***all of the time!***

### ...is already being shaped - by you!

In school there is a very strong link between attendance and success – in every year - even a small percentage drop can have a significant effect.

When our whole school attendance dropped to below 93% our GCSE results also dropped to their lowest point; when attendance hit 96% our results were the best ever. This is why maximum attendance is so important. Missing one day every fortnight is equal to six months of absence over the five years you are at school.

National statistics also support the need for outstanding attendance:

Of pupils achieving the attendance below . .	. . this percentage achieve 5 GCSEs at 9-4 (*A-C)
93.5% and above	74.3%
92.5% - 93.49%	60.4%
88% and below	26.7%

**It is for this reason that we have a minimum expectation for all pupils of 97% attendance**

**Lateness to lessons:** Constantly arriving late for classes also takes its toll, especially after morning break or lunchtime. When you arrive late you miss out on the important instructions and explanations that are given at the start of the lesson. Your selfish behaviour can lead to teaching and learning being disrupted. This is why we will not tolerate persistent lateness. Pupils arriving late to a lesson will be **given a Red Point** and there will be further sanctions, including detentions, monitoring reports and parental interviews, for repeat offenders.

**Some absences or lateness are unavoidable:** - when you are *genuinely* poorly, for example. Sometimes buses arrive late to school or a break or lunchtime extra-curricular activity may occasionally overrun. It is important not to worry or panic when this happens. Teachers will understand if you explain the circumstances. If you have a concern about any of these matters why not raise them with your Form Teacher or Pastoral Assistant / Head of School. They'll reassure you and follow up any worries.

**What's the responsibility of parents regarding school absences?** Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children attend school. Please let us know as soon as possible if your child is ill, or has a doctor's or dentist's appointment. We will need this information **by 9.30 am at the very latest** on the first morning of their absence. Please call the school (01253 872659) and select Option 1 for the Attendance Office - if the Attendance Officer is unavailable please leave a message. When leaving a message, please clearly state your name, the name of the child concerned, your relationship with the child, the reason for the child's absence and the child's Year Group and form. **Under no circumstances can a child make phone calls regarding absences from school.**

If you think it likely that your child is going to be absent for a specific number of days and are able to provide us with this information on your first phone call, we will not require further calls from you relating to the same period of absence. The safety and security of children is of paramount importance to us, but we also want to 'nip in the bud' any prospective truancy. Where there has been no notification of an absence we will contact parents. If your child needs to leave school at any time during the day, e.g. for a doctor's or dentist's appointment, they must have a note - signed by you - asking permission to leave the premises. The child must hand this note to the Heads of School / Pastoral Assistant who will issue them with a pink signing-out slip which they will hand in to the Attendance Office before leaving. **Our expectation is that such appointments will ordinarily be made out of school time.**

**How are absence and lateness monitored at school?** The **Deputy Headteacher** oversees all aspects of attendance and punctuality. She discusses individual pupils who are causing concern on a weekly basis with Heads of School / Pastoral Assistants. **Form Tutors** are responsible for marking registers and obtaining reasons for absences from pupils. They encourage the pupils in their form group to maintain a good level of attendance and punctuality at all times.

**Pupils** are responsible for arriving at morning and afternoon registration - which occurs in Period 5 - on time and ensuring that when a register is being called (including during lesson periods) they respond clearly and audibly. Any pupil who is late must report to the Attendance Office, where they should enter their name and reason for lateness in the Late Book and collect a green signing-in slip to hand to their Head of School. They are also responsible for passing on School Holiday Forms in good time, as well as letters explaining any absences after illness. **Governors** receive termly and annual attendance reports in line with Government requirements, and there is a half-termly report submitted to the local authority.

**Registration:** The school day begins at 8:40am with Morning Registration - pupils are expected on site by 8.35am at the latest but we recommend that all pupils should arrive at 8.30am. If pupils arrive at school after 8.40am they must enter the school via the main secure entrance. Pupils arriving after 8.40am without good reason will be detained the same day until 3.30pm. Afternoon Registration is straight after lunch during Period 5.

**What is considered to be "Lateness" to school?** A pupil is late ("L") if they arrive at form after 8.45am in the morning. Pupils are sometimes at the mercy of the bus operators and we take this into consideration in recording their lateness. Any pupil that is late without good reason will be detained on the same day until 3.30pm. If a pupil

arrives after 9:15am in the morning or 2.30pm in the afternoon without a valid reason they are given a “U” for an unauthorised absence. Notes from parents explaining absence will be retained securely for the current school year.

**How does the school monitor short-term absence?** Each morning Heads of School / Pastoral Assistants are informed of absent pupils. Those pupils whose parents have not notified the Attendance Office are contacted. Pastoral Assistants regularly check registers and if there is a particular concern, they may telephone parents immediately. In cases where there are erratic attendance patterns, pupils will be monitored and parents requested to meet with the Head of School. Most parents agree with us on the need for high standards in attendance and punctuality and value these communications.

**How does the school monitor long-term absence?** Long-term absence requires the school to work together with external agencies and the relevant Pastoral Assistant / Head of School, and the school’s Attendance Improvement Worker will draw up intervention and re-integration plans to support the child and the family concerned. However, in cases involving truancy and lack of cooperation with the school, Fixed Penalty Notices may be issued. The school has an obligation to pass on to the local authority the details of all pupils whose attendance falls below 90%.

## Holiday and Leave of Absence

**Holidays:** Holidays during the school term (190 days) are **not allowed**. School holidays are the times when families should take holidays. It is a key role for parents, carers and school to encourage 100% attendance at school for every child. To grant a holiday in term time gives the message to the child that their school work and school life are not important and such a message can be very damaging.

The law with regard to holidays and extended leave changed with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2013. It is a legal requirement for parents/carers to obtain the permission of the Headteacher before removing their child from school in order to take **any** leave in term time. Parents may be issued with a Penalty Notice (£120 per parent per child) if they do so without prior arrangement with the Headteacher. During the last school year, pupils missed over 4,530 lessons because of their parents taking them on holiday. Continuity of lessons is vital for all pupils in the school.

**Leave of absence:** **The law only allows the Headteacher to authorise extended leave in exceptional circumstances** - such authorisation will be extremely rare. Parents / carers **do not** have an automatic right to take their children out of school for leave during term time.

To apply for a child to be granted leave from school parents should complete a *Leave of Absence Request Form* and return it to school for consideration **at least 2 weeks** in advance of the proposed leave and before committing to any expense. Upon receipt of a request the Headteacher will make a decision as to whether or not to authorise the absence. The form will then be returned to you for your records as evidence should you be challenged by an attendance/police officer during a truancy sweep. *Please note that the decision, in law, rests with the Headteacher and whilst the local authority apply any legal sanctions, it has no responsibility for the decision.*

**Determining factors:** Leave of absence is granted at the sole discretion of the Headteacher and only in **exceptional circumstances**. In judging whether to approve such requests, the following factors will be among those considered:

- Was the request submitted two weeks prior to the intended absence?
- Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil’s education?
- Will he/she miss any national tests or examinations?
- Is his/her attendance a cause for concern?
- Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?

- Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?

Each request for leave of absence will be judged individually by the Headteacher. Cheap flights, parental holiday patterns, already having made a booking commitment etc. will not be accepted as reasons to allow leave of absence.

Our experience tells us that there are some families who choose not to be honest with us and offer excuses for absence when, in truth, they are on holiday. For this reason we will ask for medical evidence to validate a pupil's absence which occurs immediately prior to, or following a school holiday. Failure to provide such evidence may result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised and thereby trigger legal proceedings. Ultimately, the Headteacher's judgement will determine whether to authorise an absence or not.

**Fixed Penalty Notices:** are an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days. Full payment of the penalty means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted. Fixed Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where an unauthorised absence occurs including:

- truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps);
- parentally condoned absence without good reason;
- unauthorised extended leave
- persistent unauthorised late arrival at school.

Penalty Notices are issued by the local authority and once issued cannot be revoked unless information is presented that changes the original situation. If penalty notices fail to improve attendance, the local authority may initiate court proceedings.

**Children Missing Education:** We have a safeguarding duty under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 and must have in place procedures to carry our reasonable enquiries to investigate any unexplained absence. Where the reason for a child who has stopped attending school is unknown, the local authority must investigate the case and satisfy itself that the child is receiving suitable education.

**How does the school reward good attendance and punctuality?** We celebrate those pupils whose attendance is excellent by awarding them **Green Points**, prizes and certificates in special end of term assemblies. Pupils with outstanding attendance will also be eligible to go on End of Year Trips. The ultimate reward for outstanding attendance will be for each pupil to achieve his/her potential, to have been provided with the opportunity to play a full part in the life and development of the school, and to lay the foundations for a promising future.

**Is there good attendance at Cardinal Allen?** Yes. But we have no grounds for complacency. Let's all work together to strive to improve at all times.

**Any questions? Any concerns?** We are here to help! Please phone the school on 01253 872659, and the Attendance Officer will try to answer your query or will forward you to the relevant member of staff.

**Cardinal Allen Catholic High School**

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