Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College

May God's love be our guide

Attendance Policy

Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College

This policy was approved by the Governing body July 2026

This policy will be reviewed July 2027

Attendance Policy for Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College

1. Aims

At Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College, we are committed to fostering a Christ-centred school community where high levels of attendance and punctuality are integral to the spiritual, academic, and personal growth of every student.

This policy demonstrates our commitment to:

• Setting high expectations for attendance and punctuality for all students.
• Promoting the benefits of good attendance to students, parents, and the wider community.
• Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
• Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
• Acting promptly to address patterns of absence.
• Building strong, collaborative relationships with families to support consistent attendance.
Our approach is grounded in Catholic Social Teaching, emphasising dignity, solidarity, and care for the common good, ensuring equity and inclusion for all students.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed by:

• **Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE 2024)**.
• **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)**.
• Relevant sections of the **Education Act 1996**, the **Education and Inspections Act 2006**, and associated regulations.
• **Equality Act 2010**.
• **Data Protection Act 2018**, **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**, and **Data (Use and Access) Act 2025**.
• Mental health guidance for schools regarding attendance.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for:

• Promoting the importance of attendance and punctuality across school policies and the ethos of the school.
• Setting high expectations for school leaders, staff, students, and parents/carers.

• Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data to ensure effective support is provided to students and families who need it most.
• Ensuring resources and staff training are prioritised to improve attendance.

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

• Oversee the implementation of this policy and monitor school-wide attendance data.
• Report attendance trends and strategies to the Governing Board.
• Communicate high expectations for attendance and punctuality to the school community.
• Ensure timely referrals to the local authority or other agencies for students with attendance concerns.

3.3 Designated Attendance Lead (DAL)

The Designated Attendance Lead is responsible for:

• Leading and championing attendance improvement efforts.
• Monitoring and analysing attendance data to identify trends and at-risk students.
• Establishing effective attendance systems and ensuring consistent implementation.
• Liaising with parents/carers and external agencies to address attendance barriers.
• Providing tailored support and intervention plans for students with persistent or severe absence.

3.4 Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer will:

• Monitor daily attendance and ensure accurate record-keeping.
• Provide regular attendance reports to school leaders.
• Work with external partners, such as the Education Welfare Officer, to address persistent absence.
• Advise when penalty notices or other legal interventions may be appropriate.

3.5 Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are expected to:

• Ensure their child attends school daily, on time, and in full uniform.
• Notify the school of any absence by 9:00 AM on the first day and provide ongoing updates for prolonged absences.
• Avoid term-time holidays and unnecessary absences.

• Inform the school of any circumstances affecting their child's attendance and work collaboratively to address barriers.

3.6 Students

Students are expected to:

• Attend all timetabled sessions punctually.
• Follow school procedures for reporting lateness or absence.
• Engage positively with interventions to improve attendance.

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 Attendance Register

The school maintains an electronic attendance register using our Management Information System (MIS), marking students as present, absent, or attending approved off-site activities.

Registration times:

• **Morning registration:** 9:00 AM – 9:30 AM (register closes at 9:30 AM)

• **Afternoon registration:** 1:30 PM – 1:45 PM (register closes at 1:45 PM)

The school shares daily attendance data directly with the Department for Education (DfE) via our MIS, enabling us to access real-time pupil-level data and benchmarking through the **View Your Education Data (VYED)** service.

4.2 Reporting and Authorising Absence

• Absences must be reported by **9:00 AM on the first day of absence** via phone, ParentMail app, or email.
• **Medical evidence** will be required for absences exceeding **3 consecutive days**, or where there is a pattern of frequent short-term absences.
• The Headteacher may authorise absences for exceptional circumstances, such as:

- Religious observance.
- Medical appointments (minimised during school hours).
- Family emergencies (case-by-case basis).

5. Addressing Poor Attendance and Punctuality

Attendance will be regularly monitored, and interventions will be implemented for students at risk of persistent absence (<90%) or severe absence (<50%).

5.1 Interventions

The school is committed to identifying and addressing attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity. A range of graduated interventions will be implemented to support pupils and families, including:

- Weekly review and analysis of attendance data to identify emerging concerns and patterns of absence.
- Early, informal contact with parents/carers to discuss attendance issues before formal correspondence is issued. Experience shows that open and supportive communication is the most effective way to build constructive and collaborative relationships.
- Development of individual Attendance Action Plans for pupils experiencing significant barriers to regular attendance.
- Regular communication with parents/carers regarding attendance, including the use of attendance contracts where appropriate.
- Partnership working with external agencies, including the local authority, health services, and social care professionals, to support pupils and families where attendance barriers are complex or require multi-agency intervention.

To support effective communication with parents/carers, the school maintains a range of template letters relating to attendance, absence, and punctuality, including:

- Letters regarding concerns about absence, unauthorised absence, or punctuality.
- Invitations to attendance meetings and review discussions.
- Formal notifications relating to unauthorised absence.
- Responses to requests for leave of absence during term time, including approvals and refusals.
- Letters recognising and celebrating good or improved attendance.

5.2 Punctuality Procedures and Consequences

The school expects all pupils to arrive on time each day. Punctuality is essential to learning, minimises disruption to lessons, and supports pupils in developing positive habits for future education and employment. Persistent lateness may also have a negative impact on a pupil's overall attendance record and will be monitored as part of the school's attendance procedures.

5.2.1 Late Arrival Procedures

Pupils who arrive late to school must sign in as follows:

- Between 9:00am and 9:30am: Sign in at **Reception.**
- After 9:30am: Sign in at **Student Services.**

When signing in, pupils will be required to secure their mobile phone in their phone pouch. Mobile phones will be managed in accordance with the school's Mobile Phone Policy.

A 30-minute lunchtime punctuality detention will be issued on the same day for all late arrivals. This sanction will be applied consistently, regardless of how late a pupil arrives,

including where a pupil is only a few minutes late. The purpose of this approach is to deter repeated lateness and promote positive punctuality habits.

5.2.2 Punctuality Detentions

All punctuality detentions will take place in **Rome 27.**

- **Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9): 12:30pm to 1:00pm**
- **Key Stage 4 (Years 10 to 11): 1:00pm to 1:30pm**

5.2.3 Escalation of Punctuality Sanctions

The school will apply the following graduated response where pupils fail to meet expectations for punctuality. All sanctions will be applied fairly, consistently and proportionately, whilst taking account of any known barriers to attendance or punctuality.

Stage	Circumstance	School Response	Additional Measures
Stage 1: Late Arrival	A pupil arrives late to school.	A same-day 30-minute lunchtime punctuality detention will be issued.	The pupil must sign in at Reception or Student Services, as appropriate. Mobile phones will be managed in accordance with the school's Mobile Phone Policy.
Stage 2: Failure to Attend a Punctuality Detention	A pupil fails to attend their scheduled punctuality detention.	A one-hour Middle Leaders Detention will be issued for the following school day.	The Head of Year (HoY) or Pastoral Manager (PM) will meet with the pupil to discuss the missed detention and identify any barriers to compliance. Parents/carers may be informed.
Stage 3: Failure to Attend a Middle Leaders Detention	A pupil fails to attend a Middle Leaders Detention.	The pupil will be required to attend supervised lunchtime provision each day until the Middle Leaders Detention has been completed.	The HoY or PM will contact parents/carers and consider whether additional pastoral, attendance, SEND, medical, or safeguarding support is required.
Stage 4: Persistent	A pupil continues to arrive late despite previous	The school will implement further attendance and	This may include parental meetings, a Punctuality Support Plan, attendance

Punctuality Concerns	interventions and support.	punctuality interventions.	contracts, increased monitoring, and referral to appropriate external agencies.

5.2.4 Safeguarding and Individual Circumstances

The school recognises that persistent lateness may be an indicator of wider attendance, welfare, safeguarding, medical, SEND, transport, or family-related concerns. Staff will seek to understand and address any underlying barriers to punctuality before implementing further escalation.

Where patterns of lateness raise safeguarding concerns, the matter will be considered in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures and may be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

5.2.5 Reasonable Adjustments

The school recognises that some pupils may experience barriers to punctuality due to identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), medical needs, or exceptional family circumstances.

Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments may be agreed and documented by the school. Any adjustments will be considered on an individual basis and will not prevent the school from working collaboratively with pupils and families to improve punctuality.

5.2.6 Persistent Punctuality Concerns

Where punctuality does not improve despite school interventions, further attendance procedures may be implemented in line with this Attendance Policy. These may include:

- Formal attendance meetings.
- Attendance Action Plans.
- Attendance or punctuality contracts.
- Increased monitoring.
- Referrals to appropriate external agencies.
- Other targeted interventions considered necessary by the school.

5.2.7 Exceptional Circumstances

The school reserves the right to exercise discretion where lateness is caused by circumstances beyond the reasonable control of pupils and families.

Examples include:

- Major public transport disruption.
- Large-scale transport strikes.
- Severe weather conditions.
- Significant road traffic incidents.

- Other exceptional events affecting a substantial number of pupils.

In such circumstances, the school will determine an appropriate and proportionate response based on the individual circumstances of the case.

5.2.8 Guiding Principles

In applying this procedure, the school will:

- Maintain high expectations for punctuality.
- Apply sanctions fairly, consistently, and proportionately.
- Work in partnership with pupils and parents/carers.
- Seek to identify and remove barriers to punctuality.
- Ensure that safeguarding considerations remain central to all attendance and punctuality interventions.
- Provide appropriate support alongside challenge where punctuality concerns arise.

The school will always seek to balance high expectations for punctuality with a supportive approach that recognises and responds to genuine barriers affecting pupils and families

5.3 Legal Interventions

• Penalty notices or other legal measures may be used as a last resort when supportive interventions fail.

6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The school will:

• Celebrate high attendance through certificates, rewards, and recognition in assemblies.
• Share attendance data transparently with students and parents, highlighting improvements.
• Engage students and families in discussions about the importance of attendance and its link to success.

7. Supporting Students with Barriers to Attendance

7.1 Students with SEND, Medical Needs, and Vulnerable Groups

• Tailored strategies will be developed in collaboration with families, ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to address barriers.
• Where attendance is affected by an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), the local authority will be engaged to support solutions.

• **Young carers** and children with specific **medical conditions** will receive distinct safeguarding support and tailored attendance interventions.
• The school recognises that students may face barriers related to **modern slavery**, **financial exploitation**, and other safeguarding risks, and will work with appropriate agencies to address these concerns.

7.2 Reintegration Plans

For students returning from prolonged absence, reintegration plans will be created to:

• Support the student's academic and emotional needs.
• Gradually rebuild routines and confidence.

8. Attendance Monitoring

8.1 Monitoring Attendance

Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College systematically monitors attendance and absence data (including punctuality) at individual, year group, cohort, and whole-school levels on a weekly, half-termly, termly, and yearly basis.

• Specific student information will be shared with the Department for Education (DfE) on request via our MIS.
• Data is collected termly and published at national and local authority levels through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. School-level data is also shared securely with the DfE for benchmarking and improvement purposes.
• The school uses the **View Your Education Data (VYED)** service to access real-time pupil-level data and compare our attendance with similar schools.
• From the **2026/27 academic year**, the school will track progress against our **Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectation (ABIE)**, a minimum attendance expectation set by the government.
• Attendance data will be benchmarked against local, regional, and national levels to identify focus areas for improvement, ensuring alignment with the school's values and ethos.
• Regular analysis ensures that attendance trends are shared with the governing board to facilitate accountability and informed decision-making.

8.2 Analysing Attendance

The school will:

• Regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify patterns and trends, including students or cohorts requiring targeted support.

• **Break down attendance data by key cohorts**, including:

- Year groups
- Gender
- Ethnic minorities (avoiding grouping distinct ethnic groups together)
- Pupil premium students (separated into disadvantaged, looked-after/previously looked-after children, and service children)
- Pupils with SEND
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils
- Young carers
- Students with medical conditions

  • Identify students at risk of persistent absence (10% or more) or severe absence (50% or more) and ensure early intervention.

  • Review attendance data across key periods (half-termly, termly, annually) to evaluate progress and adjust strategies as needed.

  • Monitor historic and emerging patterns of attendance to inform action plans and strategies to address specific issues.

8.3 Using Data to Improve Attendance

The school will:

• Develop targeted action plans based on attendance data to address patterns of absence for individuals, groups, or cohorts.
• Provide targeted support for students and families identified as having attendance concerns, especially those at risk of persistent or severe absence (see section 8.4).
• Share attendance reports with class teachers/form tutors, governing board members, and senior leaders, including the SENCO, designated safeguarding lead (DSL), and pupil premium lead.
• Monitor the impact of attendance interventions, using data to modify strategies and ensure continuous improvement.
• Collaborate with local authorities, neighbouring schools, and external partners to provide coordinated support for students at risk of persistent or severe absence.

8.4 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent and severe absence are significant barriers to student success and are central to the school's attendance improvement strategy.

The school will:

• Identify patterns of persistent and severe absence through data analysis and address them promptly.

• Consider safeguarding concerns in line with **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)** and address these concerns with appropriate support and interventions.
• Hold regular meetings with parents of students identified as vulnerable, persistently absent, or severely absent to:

- Discuss attendance and barriers to engagement.
- Explain available support and interventions.
- Outline the consequences of continued absence, including potential sanctions.
- Review and refine attendance improvement plans.
  • Provide access to wider support services through collaboration with the local authority and external partners.
  • Implement tailored interventions for students, considering the root causes of absence, including mental health, family circumstances, or external pressures.
  • Issue sanctions where necessary, in line with section 5.2 of this policy, while prioritising supportive measures.

Additional measures include:
• Regular communication with parents via letters, phone calls, and attendance contracts.
• Increased monitoring and follow-ups for students with unauthorised absences.
• Escalation of cases to the Education Welfare Officer and Local Education Authority when necessary.

9. Catholic Social Teaching and Attendance

This policy is underpinned by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching:

• **Human Dignity:** Every child deserves access to education to fulfil their potential.
• **Solidarity:** We work together as a community to support families and students facing challenges.
• **The Common Good:** High attendance strengthens our collective success and contributes to a thriving, inclusive school environment.

10. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually or when guidance from the local authority and/or Department for Education is updated. The review will be led by the Designated Attendance Lead in collaboration with the Headteacher and approved by the full Governing Board.

11. Links with Other Policies

This attendance policy is closely aligned with:

• **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy** – ensuring the safety and well-being of students at risk of missing education.
• **Behaviour for Learning Policy** – linking attendance with expectations for punctuality and engagement.
• **Equality Policy** – addressing barriers to attendance equitably and inclusively.
• **SEND Policy** – ensuring students with special educational needs receive tailored support for attendance.

By embedding attendance monitoring within a broader framework of care, support, and Catholic Social Teaching, Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College ensures every student has the opportunity to thrive academically, spiritually, and socially.

Annex: Children Missing Education

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education that is suitable for their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have.

Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College is committed to safeguarding children at risk of missing education, in line with **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)** and **Working Together to Improve Attendance (2024)**.

1. Recognising Risks

The school acknowledges that a child going missing from education can be a potential indicator of:

• Abuse or neglect, including domestic abuse or parental substance misuse.
• Exploitation, including criminal or sexual exploitation, **modern slavery**, or **financial exploitation**.
• Radicalisation or extremism.
• Female genital mutilation (FGM).
• Forced marriage.
• Family or community factors, such as travelling to conflict zones or experiencing homelessness.
• Bullying or mental health issues, contributing to prolonged absences.

2. Admission and Attendance Monitoring

• **Admission Register:** On the day of a student's admission, the school promptly records the student's details in the admission register, ensuring all statutory information is collected, including the student's **biological sex** as legally required.

• **Daily Monitoring:** The attendance of all students is tracked daily using the school's Management Information System (MIS).
• **Same-Day Contact:** Parents/carers are contacted on the first day of any unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
• **Lateness Monitoring:** Unexplained lateness after the register has closed is treated with equal diligence, and parents are informed.

3. Investigating Absences

If a student fails to attend on the agreed or notified start date or there is unexplained absence, the school will:

1. Undertake reasonable and timely enquiries to locate the student. This may include contacting parents/carers, relatives, emergency contacts, and other schools or agencies known to be involved with the family.
2. Where concerns persist, escalate the matter to the Local Authority's Children Missing Education (CME) officer.
3. If there are immediate safeguarding concerns, contact social services or the police, as appropriate.

4. Removal from the Admission Register

A student may only be removed from the admission register in the following circumstances:

1. If the student has been absent without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, following reasonable enquiries to establish their whereabouts.
2. If the school has reasonable grounds to believe the student is not attending due to illness or other unavoidable causes, they will remain on roll.
3. If the student has transferred to another school or is registered for home education, confirmed by the Local Authority.
4. If the student has moved abroad, or other exceptional circumstances have been verified.

5. Reporting to the Local Authority

In line with statutory requirements, the school will:

• Notify the Local Authority of students who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for 10 consecutive school days without permission.
• Inform the Local Authority when a student's name is added to or removed from the admission register outside of standard transition times.

• Provide details of students who may be at risk of missing education due to persistent or severe absence.
The Local Authority will be informed of any student whose name is removed from the register under CME regulations, and all reasonable enquiries will be documented.

6. Safeguarding Response

The school recognises its duty to act promptly and proportionately to safeguard children missing education. Actions may include:

• Immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where attendance concerns indicate potential risk.
• Collaboration with external agencies, including the Local Authority CME team, social services, and police, to locate and support students.
• Following statutory guidance on reporting and escalating concerns, including for FGM, forced marriage, radicalisation, modern slavery, or financial exploitation.

7. Preventative Measures

• The school emphasises high attendance through clear policies, proactive communication with families, and interventions for at-risk students.
• A robust Attendance Policy ensures regular monitoring of attendance patterns and targeted support for families facing barriers to attendance.
• Employing the services of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) supports the school in addressing persistent absence cases effectively.

By maintaining vigilance and addressing attendance concerns promptly, Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College ensures that all students have access to the education they deserve, while safeguarding their wellbeing and future opportunities.