



Learning and Challenge Rooted in Faith

St. Benedict's Catholic Primary School, Lambourn Way, Lordswood, Kent ME5 8PU

Tel: 01634 669700

4th September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Introducing our new Attendance Policy: Thrive Under Five

Welcome back to a new academic year. We hope you and your family have had an enjoyable and restful summer break.

At St. Benedict's we believe every child deserves the very best opportunity to succeed. One of the most important factors in achieving this is excellent school attendance.

Why attendance matters

Children who attend school regularly are more likely to:

- achieve higher academic outcomes;
- develop stronger friendships and social skills;
- build confidence and resilience;
- experience greater wellbeing; and
- be better prepared for the next stage of their education and future life.

Our own experience, alongside national research, clearly shows that excellent attendance is one of the strongest indicators of future success.

This year, we are launching our new attendance initiative, **"Thrive Under Five"**. This reflects our commitment to ensuring every child attends school regularly so they can flourish academically, socially and emotionally.

Our aim is for all pupils to achieve at least **97%** attendance throughout the year.

What does "Thrive Under Five" mean?

Our aim is simple:

Children should miss no more than five days of school during the academic year wherever possible.

Every lesson matters. Learning is carefully planned so that each day builds on the one before. Missing school means children can miss important learning, experiences and opportunities that are difficult to replace.

Our attendance expectations

The expectation is that every child attends every session, every day, unless they are genuinely too unwell to attend or there are exceptional circumstances.

We will continue to monitor attendance throughout the year using the following attendance bands:

Attendance	Days Absent	Our View
 Above 99%	2 days or fewer	Excellent
 97–99%	Fewer than 5 days	Good – Thrive Under Five
 95–96.9%	Around 9 days	Below Expectation
 90–94.9%	13–18 days	Poor
 Below 90%	More than 19 days	Persistent Absence



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Rather than waiting until attendance becomes a significant concern, we will contact families early if attendance begins to fall so that we can work together to identify any barriers and offer appropriate support before attendance becomes a bigger issue. We will write to parents when the 5 days of absence threshold has been met, and attendance will be discussed at all parent teacher meetings. Once this threshold has been met the school may request a higher threshold of medical evidence in order to authorise absence.

When should my child stay at home?

The NHS advises that many common childhood illnesses do not require children to miss school. If your child is well enough to take part in normal school activities, they should attend.

Condition	Should my child attend school?	Guidance
Mild cold or cough	☒ Yes	Children with a mild cold or cough should attend school. Encourage good hand hygiene and provide tissues if needed.
Sore throat	☒ Yes	Most sore throats do not require time off school. Ensure your child drinks plenty of fluids.
Anxiety or worries about school	☒ Yes	It is common for children to feel anxious at times. Attending school usually helps, and we encourage families to speak to us so we can provide support.
Conjunctivitis	☒ Yes	Children can usually attend school. Encourage regular hand washing and avoid rubbing the eyes.
Head lice	☒ Yes	Children do not need to stay at home. Hair should be treated with an appropriate treatment.
COVID-19 (mild cold-like symptoms)	☒ Yes	Children can usually continue attending school if they feel well enough.

Please notify the school as soon as possible if your child is absent due to illness using the school's usual reporting procedure.

Where absence has become frequent and attendance is not good or better; we may ask for medical evidence before authorising further illness absence.

Medical appointments and leave during term time

Routine GP, dental and optician appointments should be made outside the school day wherever possible.

Leave of absence during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Family holidays will not be authorised in line with national regulations, and unauthorised holidays will result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

Requests for exceptional leave should be made in writing to the Headteacher at least two weeks in advance wherever possible.

Requests for leave under exceptional circumstances.

Requests for absence due to exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis by the Headteacher (or delegated member of staff). Only the school has the authority to authorise absence, and providing a reason does not automatically guarantee approval. Exceptional circumstances are defined as rare, significant and unavoidable



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events that are wholly outside the control of the family and cannot be arranged at another time, such as the bereavement or critical illness of an immediate family member. Requests for family holidays, celebrations, reunions, visiting relatives abroad, work commitments or travel costs will not normally be authorised and Headteachers cannot take travel cost variations into account. Where a request does not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances, or sufficient evidence is not provided, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Working together to support attendance

We know that families sometimes experience challenges that affect attendance, and our approach is always one of partnership and support in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

If attendance begins to decline, we will:

- keep parents informed of the number of days missed;
- contact families early to discuss any concerns;
- invite parents to attendance support meetings where appropriate;
- agree practical actions to improve attendance;
- provide support to help children return to school successfully; and
- review progress together before any formal intervention becomes necessary.

Attendance will also be discussed during Parent Consultation Evenings.

Keeping Children Safe

When a child is absent and we have not received an explanation, we have a responsibility to make sure they are safe. This may include:

- Calling parents or carers.
- Contacting all emergency contacts.
- Sending emails or messages.
- Contacting siblings' schools.
- Conducting a welfare home visit where appropriate.
- Seeking support from Medway Local Authority or other services if necessary.

To help us do this, please ensure we always have:

- ☒ Up-to-date telephone numbers
- ☒ Current email addresses
- ☒ Current home address
- ☒ At least two emergency contacts

Further Information

Attached is a guide called '**School Attendance Matters**'

- Medical absence and when evidence may be requested.
- Holidays during term time.
- Unauthorised absence.
- Attendance support and interventions.
- Education Penalty Notices.
- How attendance concerns are managed.



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Every day really does count

Missing just five days of school during the year still allows your child to maintain approximately 97% attendance, giving them the best chance of success.

By working together and aiming to **"Thrive Under Five"**, we can ensure every child benefits from the learning, friendships and opportunities that school provides every single day.

A full copy of the school's Attendance Policy will be available on our website.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership in helping every child thrive.

Yours sincerely

Mrs McAlpine
Headteacher