



Mrs A D Thorpe  
Head Teacher

## St John Vianney Catholic Primary School

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*Through following Jesus, we aim to be a caring, happy school, where everyone is valued and appreciated and can reach their true potential. We hope to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with our God.*

**READY, RESPECTFUL, SAFE**

18<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is amazing to think that we have already arrived at the February half term break. Despite the freezing temperatures the children have all been amazing and continue to embrace their learning in a really positive way, we are so proud of all of them.

### **Building update**

Some of you may have read in the press recently about the possible implications of RAAC on our old building and a neighbouring BBCET school, it is a good moment to update you with the following from BBCET.

*The Department for Education has met with BBCET and the headteachers of both schools to review the long-term needs of both schools. The timescale for procurement and subsequent planning processes are yet to be agreed. However, both schools are very happy with the manner in which the DfE has handled all aspects of the move to temporary buildings and the excellent communication they have had regarding their potential new builds. BBCET welcomes the speed and proactivity of DfE colleagues locally and nationally in addressing the needs of our schools. Last month, Baroness Smith of Malvern, former MP Jacqui Smith who is Minister of State for Education, told the House of Lords: "The department has committed to resolving this problem as quickly as possible, permanently removing RAAC either through grant funding or the School Rebuilding Programme."*

As we progress with ideas, plans and gather further information, we will share this with you in a timely manner. It is so exciting that the community of St John Vianney and our neighbouring BBCET school will benefit from the expertise of the DfE, architects and designers to come up with the best possible proposal to accommodate the future learning needs of all of our pupils.

### **Residential Reminder**

For parents in Y4, Y5 and Y6 please remember that all residential trips can be paid for online either in full or in instalments. If you want to discuss anything about the trips, then please contact school.

### **Nursery**

Nursery has a full-time (Miss Morris) teacher and a part-time (Mrs Stafford) teacher, working alongside (Miss Allen) an experienced Teaching Assistant. There have been lots of exciting developments to the nursery provision both inside and outside since September 2024, which I am sure your children have told you about. The bespoke nursery outside area is currently being enjoyed by the nursery children on a daily basis; we also have some plans in the pipeline for an additional balance bike area.



St John Vianney Catholic Primary School is part of the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust (BBCET) company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales under company registration number No 7841435.  
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## World Book Day

As you are all aware, the national celebration for Word Book Day is on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March <https://www.worldbookday.com/> Children can come to school dressed as their favourite character from a book. This falls in the first week back after half term, and in this year of the Jubilee we have also been asked to pray and focus on the gift of 'Hope' during Lent. World book day tokens will be sent home before half term, to enable you all to use them as you wish over the holidays, we don't want you to miss out!

## The start of Lent

As children return to school on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, every year group will take part in a Celebration of the Word, as a doorway into this period of reflection and prayer. On Ash Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March, pupils from Year 4 to Year 6 will attend morning Mass at St John Vianney church to take part in the distribution of ashes. The pupils from EYFS to Y3 will have ashes distributed at school. Each year group is being tasked with creating a Lenten Focal point, so please look out for photographs as they appear on Facebook.

## Did you know?

90% attendance sounds good but means that your child misses on average:

- One half day every week.
- Nearly four weeks every school year.
- Over one school year in a school career.

2 weeks of leave in term time every year with no other absences means that your child:

- Can only ever achieve 95% attendance
- Will miss about two terms in a school career

Being just 5 minutes late every day adds up to missing about 3 days of school every year.

## LATENESS

There are a number of pupils who continue to be late every day, they miss the start of lessons, become distressed when entering school and disrupt their friends learning as they come into the class late. Jan Gurkin, the attendance officer from Clennell, has been asked to contact parents again to reiterate the importance of time keeping. **School starts at 8:45am for every pupil**, Mrs McDine stands outside from 8:30am, to allow early access to school, but it has now got to the point where she is still outside at 9:15am, parents continue to disregard their child's safety and drop children off outside of school and walk away, after the 8:45am start time.

## Attendance Update

**The following is an update from Newcastle Local Authority – all the links are from their website.**

You must make sure your child gets a [full-time education](#) that meets their needs (for example if they have special educational needs). You can send your child to school or [educate them yourself](#). Children must get an education between the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday in June in the school year they turn 16. You can be prosecuted if you don't give your child an education. You'll normally get warnings and offers of help first.

## When your child can miss school

You can only allow your child to miss school if either:

- you've got advance permission from the school
- they're too ill to go in

There's extra support available if your child can't go to school for long periods because of a health problem.

## Unauthorised leave of absence during term time

You have to get permission from the head teacher if you want to take your child out of school during term time.

You can only do this if:

- you make an application to the head teacher in advance (as a parent the child normally lives with)
- there are exceptional circumstances

It's up to the head teacher how many days your child can be away from school if leave is granted. You can be fined for taking your child out of school without the school's permission.

## Illness and your child's education

If your child is ill, it's important to take time to get better, but infection doesn't always mean that your child has to be off school for ages. Schools can help you with [guidance on how long your child should be off with an illness](#).

- If your child is going to be absent, contact the school on the first morning and keep the school up to date if it turns out to be a longer absence.
- Send a signed and dated note with the reason for the absence when your child returns to school.
- It is the school that decides whether to authorise an absence.
- If there is a problem speak to the school - support will be available but staff need to be told about any difficulties as soon as possible.

## If your child has a medical condition

All maintained schools and academies should support [children with medical conditions](#). You should tell the school if your child has medical needs. You can ask to see the school's policy on supporting pupils with medical conditions. If your child has a disability, the school must make '[reasonable adjustments](#)' to make sure they aren't discriminated against.

## The impact of your child being absent from school on a regular basis

Absence means:

- Missing out on coursework and it can be very hard to catch up.
- Losing touch with friends and teaching staff.
- Finding it more difficult to have a successful future after leaving school.
- Having more opportunities to become involved in crime and anti-social behaviour either as victim or perpetrator.
- You could be fined or prosecuted and may get a criminal record.

## Help with getting your child to go to school

Talking to the school is the best place to start. Don't be afraid to get to know your child's teachers and head teacher - sharing problems is the first step to solving them. Your school will have an attendance policy available from the school or on their website. It will often identify the right person to talk to.

The school will discuss attendance problems with you and should agree a plan with you to improve your child's attendance.

Forms of help could include accessing support from other agencies and services such as:

- support to reduce the burden on children where families are in difficulty (for example if a child is spending a lot of time caring for someone)
- working with you and your child to overcome bullying and other serious problems
- working with you to develop parenting skills and strategies to help manage your child's behaviour
- an attendance contract

## Attendance contract

This is a voluntary written agreement between you and the school's governing body. Between you, you agree to find ways to improve your child's attendance. If you refuse to make a contract or you don't stick to it, it can be used as evidence if the council decides to prosecute you.

## Legal action to enforce school attendance

Councils and schools can use various legal powers if your child is missing school without a good reason. We can give you:

- a Parenting Order
- an Education Supervision Order
- a School Attendance Order
- a fine (sometimes known as a 'penalty notice')

You can be given one or more of these, and we don't have to do this before prosecuting you.

## Parenting Order

This means you have to go to parenting classes. You'll also have to do what the court says to improve your child's school attendance.

## Education Supervision Order

If we think you need support getting your child to go to school and you're not co-operating, we can apply to a court for an Education Supervision Order. A supervisor will be appointed to help you get your child into education. We can do this instead of prosecuting you, or as well. You may be guilty of an offence if you persistently fail to comply with reasonable directions - the maximum fine is £1,000.

## School Attendance Order

We can give you a School Attendance Order if we think your child isn't getting an education. You'll have 15 days to provide evidence that you've registered your child with the school listed in the order or that you're giving them [home education](#). If you don't, you could be prosecuted or given a fine.

## Fixed Penalty Notice (fine)

Fixed penalty notice amounts have changed. As from 19th August 2024 you could be issued with the following:

- For your first offence within a three-year rolling period, you could be fined £160 to be paid within 28 days, which can be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- For your second offence within a three-year rolling period, you could be fined £160 to be paid within 28 days, with no option to pay a reduced amount.
- For your third offence within a three-year rolling period, you will not be issued with a fine and will be referred straight to court.

## Prosecution

You could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court also gives you a Parenting Order.

## How can I help my child to get the best out of school?

- Be aware of the impact of regular absences - missing school is missing out.
- Build up good habits of punctuality and attendance. These start early in life, so even before your child starts school, establish good routines, such as reading before bedtime and going to bed on time.
- Make sure your child understands the benefits of regular attendance at school.
- If your child is off school, you must let the school know why and tell them when they can expect your child back.
- It can be difficult, but try to make all appointments for the doctor, dentist, optician after school hours or during the school holidays where possible.
- Don't let your child stay off for reasons like going shopping, birthdays, minding the house, looking after brothers and sisters.
- Avoid taking family holidays in term time.
- Take an active interest in your child's school work and offer support with homework.
- Attend parents' evenings to discuss your child's progress.
- Don't let your child stay off school for a minor ailment.
- Each school day is split into two sessions and the attendance register is taken every morning and afternoon. If your child is poorly first thing but improves by lunchtime, send them into school for the afternoon session.
- If your child recovers from illness before the end of the week, send them back to school even if it's only for one day - every day counts.

For further information, please refer to the Department for Education's 'Working together to improve school attendance' parent guide. [DfE external document template \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](#)

## Section 19 of the Education Act - Is my child entitled to alternative provision if they are not at school?

Section 19 of the 1996 Education Act places a duty on Local Authorities to arrange suitable education for children who are unable to attend school. As a guide, absences of fifteen days or more triggers this duty. There are various reasons why a child may be unable to attend school, such as permanent exclusion or illness. However, an illness that prevents

school attendance for this length of time is rare. Children who are in this situation are very unwell. The Section 19 duty does not cover absence from school due to normal worries or anxiety, concerns about bullying or dissatisfaction with school policy or process. In these situations, parents have a responsibility to work with the school to overcome these barriers. If you feel that the school is not responding to your concerns, you should follow the school's complaints procedure. If it is likely that your child will be unable to attend school for more than fifteen days, despite the best efforts of school and parents, the school will contact the Local Authority for guidance. Under Section 19, the Local Authority will support the school to provide a suitable education while your child is unable to attend. The nature of this education provision will vary depending on the circumstances of the absence.

Below are some further questions and answers that cover some of these circumstances.

### **What should I do if my child doesn't want to attend school?**

It is perfectly normal for children to experience difficult emotions about attending school. This might be caused by worries about friendships, schoolwork, exams or variable moods. This can be stressful for parents, but it is important to encourage your child to attend school regularly. If children get into a habit of missing school, they get behind with their learning and miss out on friendships and social connections. This makes them even more anxious about returning. Getting into the habit of going to school even if they feel a bit unwell or anxious is a good life lesson for children that builds resilience.

### **What can I do if my child is anxious and avoiding school?**

If your child is regularly trying to avoid going to school or is refusing to attend, it is important to talk with your child about it. Children often struggle to explain their feelings, so they might not be able to answer a direct question like 'what's going on?'. Mind maps or anxiety icebergs are a good way of talking about worries. Some good examples are included in links below. Once you understand the problem better, speak with the school and talk about your concerns. Even though you may be worried about the situation, it is important to maintain positive contact with your child's school. Schools want to help and can often make adjustments to reduce your child's worries. Anxiety and worry about school usually have a specific cause which can be sorted out. However, if you feel that your child might have an underlying difficulty you should discuss this with the school. You may need to speak with the school SENCO. If you don't keep in contact with school, absences are likely to be treated as unauthorised and may well be referred for legal action.

### **What happens if my child is too anxious to attend school?**

In very rare cases, some children are unable to attend school due to a mental health illness. If your child is experiencing significant anxiety and is distressed you should make an appointment with your family GP for advice and inform your child's school. The school will work with you to create a plan to help your child to get back to full time attendance. To do this, the school will take any medical evidence into account, and will seek advice from Local Authority officers. If your child has an education, health and care plan (EHCP), a significant change like this will probably result in a review of the EHC plan. For all other children, the school may want to raise your child's case at the Locality Inclusion Panel. This is a multi-agency panel which can help the school create an effective plan for your child. If the school wishes to discuss your child's case at the panel, they will ask for your consent. For most children in this situation, getting back into full time attendance at their school is best for their mental health and academic outcomes. The plan will set out how this is going to be achieved. Each plan is specific to individual children, but most will aim to gradually build up attendance at school. It is important that your child does not drop behind academically during this time, so the plan will set out how learning will be maintained, with as much face to face learning as possible. If further advice comes to light, such as advice following work with mental health specialists, this will be incorporated into the plan. Supporting a child in this situation is very challenging for parents. You will need to encourage your child to progress through the plan. You will also need to be prepared for setbacks, especially when building up attendance at school. It is essential to keep in regular contact with the school, especially about what is and is not working. The plan will be monitored regularly, and the school should involve you in this.

### **My child is likely to be unable to attend school because of a serious illness. What should I do?**

If you know that your child is likely to be absent from school for a while, perhaps due to a major operation or significant ongoing treatment, you should inform your child's school. The school will get in touch with the Local Authority for advice. In cases of treatment for serious illness that might involve extended hospital stays, or where attending school would be impossible due to risk of infection, the Local Authority commissions Bridges to provide a

suitable education. In such cases, a multi-agency panel would make this decision, usually based on advice from hospital consultants.

### **Where can I find more advice?**

[School Anxiety and Refusal | Parent Guide to Support | YoungMinds](#) has lots of useful tips and advice for parents about children's mental health from the national charity Young Minds.

<https://padlet.com/NewcastleEP/emotionally-based-school-non-attendance-ebsna-support-and-in-hzpbuueal1kspiwr> is a set of resources for schools and parents from the Education Psychology Service in Newcastle. [accessandinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:accessandinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk) is the email address for the access and inclusion team at Newcastle City Council. They can help if you have questions about school attendance, including provision under Section 19. [www.newcastlesendiass.co.uk](http://www.newcastlesendiass.co.uk) is Newcastle City Council's independent advice service about SEND. [DfE summary of responsibilities when mental health is affecting attendance](#) is a summary document for parents, schools and local authorities explaining their role with mental health related absences.

### **Update about Threadworms**

It has been reported that several children across school are being treated repeatedly for threadworms. Please can all parents make sure they follow the NHS guidance <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/threadworms/>

### **Swimming (Year 5 Only)**

The pupils in Y5 Miss Dolphin's class are taking part in two weeks of swimming from Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March to Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March, a letter will be sent out separately with more details. Mrs Haughton's Y5 class will take part in their swimming lessons in June, details will follow.

### **Parents evening reminder**

After half term on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March and Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March teachers will be available for parents evening. The booking slots will be sent out after half term. We strongly advise that parents book a slot to speak to their child's class teacher to get updates about pupil progress. Mrs Meldrum, school SENDCo, will also be available to speak to.

### **Advance Notice**

In April, St John Vianney Catholic Primary School will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and whilst unfortunately the bishop is unable to visit us as he is out visiting so many other schools in the Diocese, I know that we will have a magical week of celebrations. This is an exciting time in our school history, and I know that pupils, staff, governors and our whole school and church community will come together to make this a memorable week. We will write to you nearer the time, with more details, but please keep us in your prayers as staff work tirelessly to make this a one in a lifetime treat for our children.

Pupils finish for their half term holidays this week on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> Feb, staff have an INSET day on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> Feb, so school will not be open for pupils. We hope you all have a safe and restful half term holiday and return to school ready for the new term on **Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025 8:45am.**

Best wishes,

*A D Thorpe*

Mrs A D Thorpe  
Headteacher