

**Our Lady of Perpetual Succour
Catholic Primary School**

**Whole School Attendance Policy
Procedures**



We learn to love everyone as Jesus loves us

Whole School Attendance Policy Procedures.

Introduction:

At Our Lady's Catholic Primary School we recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for children. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

The Law:

From 1st September 2013 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 amends the 2006 Regulations and makes clear that Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional Circumstances:

The Headteacher or person designated by the Headteacher will determine what are considered to be exceptional circumstances. These circumstances are not defined within this policy but examples laid down in guidance for schools will be considered. (Refer to Halton Model Policy Leave of Absence).

DfE guidance:

States that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.

Aim:

To create a pattern of regular attendance.

The aim of this policy is to set out the way in which Our Lady's monitors and promotes the attendance and punctuality of our pupils. It incorporates the Attendance policy which will be distributed to parents.

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletters and we ask for your full support.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

It is very important that children attend regularly. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting regular attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

It is very important therefore that children attend regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;

Track pupils' attendance and monitor and evaluate progress.

Raise awareness if punctuality is an issue as this will contribute to attendance.

Support whole school attendance levels by ensuring that persistent absence is no more than the national average and that attendance is at least in line with the national average;

Identify pupils persistently absent from school (10% or more absence)

Identify groups of pupils and individuals whose absence and punctuality is a cause for concern by identifying the main causes for this and taking action to address and support them and their families to improve individual punctuality and attendance.

Celebrate good attendance;

Reward good or improving attendance;

Work together with pupils, parents and staff in raising attendance levels across the school.

Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.

Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.

Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole school attendance.

Monitoring, Analysis, Action Planning:

Our Lady's will use electronic systems for monitoring attendance at both individual pupil and whole school level, and will analyse patterns and trends of non-attendance to inform future action planning and target setting in respect of whole school attendance matters.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness.

Medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school time.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings including penalty notices.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and leave of absence in term time which have not been agreed.
- Days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher.

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

If there are problems with regular attendance or if a child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up the reason for absence and giving into pressure to let them stay at home.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore, any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be given priority consideration, the local authority and parents will be informed of this immediately. The educational welfare officer (EWO) will monitor all children with persistent absence issues.

PA pupils are tracked academically and monitored carefully through our pupil progress monitoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action plan with a view to improve and sustain an acceptable level of attendance and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a mentor, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes, parenting contracts and participation in group activities around raising attendance. Please note all PA cases are automatically made known to the Local Authority School Attendance Team.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us prior to school, before 8.30am, if possible, on the morning of the first day of absence, either by phone or you can call into school and report to reception so that a message can be left on the electronic register.
- Update the school if the absence is expected to continue. Parents may be asked to provide medical verification during or following a pupil's absence. Medication brought as evidence must be prescribed.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Invite you to discuss the situation with the Headteacher (Attendance Lead), if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

In-school strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

This includes:

- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, attendance lead (Headteacher) and EWO.
- Parenting contracts
- Use of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and / or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority School Attendance Team)
- Attendance panels
- Penalty notices

The Local Authority Attendance Team EWS:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (EWS). They will try to resolve the situation by following current government guidance and procedures if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed. If unauthorised absences persist without co-operation with school and / or other services, the case will be referred to EWS to forward to Legal Services. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Lateness Procedures:

Children who arrive late to school must be accompanied by a parent/guardian who must give a reason for their child/ children being late. Parents failing to do so will need to meet the Attendance Lead and if necessary be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Team.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

School sessions start at **8.45am and 1.00pm** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked at the beginning of each session and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. "L".

Registers will be closed **10 minutes** after school sessions begin. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows to be on site, "U". This means that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet the Attendance Lead/Headteacher/EWO to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave in Term Time:

There are no longer holidays during term time. Holidays should not be booked prior to application for Leave of Absence.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time. Leave of absence will only be authorised under exceptional circumstances and proof of circumstances must be provided.

A leave of absence form must be completed in advance of the dates requested using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office. Parents/carers may be required to attend an interview to discuss their request for leave of absence.

Leave of absence **shall not** be granted unless:

A request for leave has been in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides and the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request. If the request is not granted the leave of Absence will be unauthorised and passed to EWS for consideration for a penalty notice.

Use of penalty notices:

Our Lady's School will request that the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence. This includes Leave of Absence which is taken without prior request being made and leave taken after prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of this advice. Our Lady's School may also request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason. In accordance with the Regulations parents of children who arrive after the registers close and for whom punctuality is a continuing issue may face the possibility of a Penalty.

It is important to understand that leave in term time will not be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

Where a pupil is absent from school without permission of the school, the parent/ carer of the pupil may be issued with a £60.00 Penalty Notice per parent per child. If the notice remains unpaid after 21 days, the penalty increases to £120.00. If the notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the Local Authority will refer to Legal Services and may commence proceedings under section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act in the Magistrates Court.

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually.
- Contact school on 1st day of absence.
- Update school if absence persists.
- Avoid any leave in term time and apply in advance using Leave of Absence Request Form.
- Attend meetings in school regarding their child(rens) attendance /punctuality.
- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Frameworks (CAF) and co-operate in support and interventions offered by the school or other agencies.

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime.
- Attend school/registration, punctuality.
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance.
- Co-operate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies.

Headteacher / School Attendance Lead

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school.
- Ensure there are designated staff with day to day responsibility for attendance matters.
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities.
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance.
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision.
- Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process.

Designated Staff:

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided.
- Input and update the attendance registers.
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups.
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents.
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance.

All school staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment.
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum.
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns.
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff.

Governors:

- Ensure compliance with current Pupil Registration Regulations
- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly.
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy.
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures.
- Authorise the Headteacher (Deputy Headteacher in her absence) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high as level of attendance as possible.

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