



Our Lady Catholic Primary School

Attendance Policy



The Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust
A Catholic Academy

July 2023

Policy Aims

At Our Lady School, we want the whole school community – governors, staff, parents and pupils to be committed to high standards of attendance and punctuality.

The school aims to ensure that all our pupils take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and we strive to raise standards by promoting the regular attendance and punctuality of all our pupils.

Target Setting

This school sets target in accordance with Statutory Instrument 2005 No. 58. The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2005.

The annual target for attendance for the school year is 96%+. The annual target is the total attendance expected in the school year, expressed as a percentage of the total possible attendance by pupils at the school.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below).

Parents/Carers

Parents are expected to ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents should notify the school office by 9.15am by telephone or e mail. A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parent. If the school deems the explanation to be unacceptable, this absence must be recorded as unauthorised. If the school is not notified by 9.15am the absence will be recorded as unauthorized.

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff. The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently. Parents accompanying their children should sign them in at the office on arrival. If a child arrives late unaccompanied, the parent will be contacted to confirm the reason for lateness.

Parents will contact the school on the first day of absence, and every subsequent day, of the reason for their child's absence from school.

Registration

Children should arrive at school between 8.45am and 9am and enter their classrooms directly. If a child arrives after 9am they must be signed in at the office by a parent/carer for safeguarding purposes. If the child arrives between 9am and 9:15am they will be recorded as late. If a child arrives after 9:15am they will be recorded as an unauthorised absent if an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming .

Recording of minutes late

Registers are taken promptly at the start of the school day (9am) and again at the beginning of the afternoon session (1.00pm). Registers close at 9.15am and 1.15pm and are marked consistently by staff. If a pupil arrives late for school, he/she must be accompanied by a parent/carer who will sign the child in at the office on the electronic signing in system. Parents/carers are expected to provide a reason for the child's late arrival at school. The School Office staff is responsible for transferring all late arrivals into the register. If a pupil is persistently late, the Headteacher will contact the parents/carers. The school will employ a range of strategies (see below) to encourage good attendance and punctuality.

In the event of an Emergency, the electronic register is taken to the Assembly points.

Parents/carers are reminded that if a child arrives in school after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the pupil has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session. Registers will be marked in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) `guidance.

Parents will ensure that school are informed of any changes of contact details.

The Headteacher, in consultation with the Attendance Welfare Officer, will inspect the live digital registers regularly in order to ensure that correct procedures are being followed. Attendance software enables the school to maintain very up-to-date records and is instantly accessible to teachers and the Headteacher.

Following up Lateness

Parents/carers whose children are regularly late for school, will be contacted by a member of school staff who will work with the parent/carer(s) to bring about an improvement in punctuality.

Notification of Absences

Notification must be provided for all absences from school. Notifications will be accepted from parents /carers only.

Notifications will be accepted by telephone, e-mail or letter to the school office only.

Reasons for absence will be recorded by designated staff.

The school will record absence when a satisfactory reason is provided for the absence. School may decide not to authorise absence, if an unsatisfactory reason is provided.

The Headteacher and designated Governor will make the decision to authorise a particular absence, and inform parents/carers where necessary.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

Absences can only be authorised by a member of the senior leadership team. It is vital that all senior leaders adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

Our Lady School will decide on how an absence is to be recorded according to 'School Attendance: Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence' (DFE 1994). This states that:

Absences can be **authorised** if:

- The pupil was absent with leave (defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school').
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- The school is not within walking distance of the child's home, and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following:
 1. the child's transport to and from school,
 2. boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school, and
 3. enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home.
- The pupil is the child of traveller parents and the conditions as stated in paragraph 47 of the 1994 guidance are met.
- There is a family bereavement.
- The pupil is visiting another school for a legitimate reason.
- The pupil is attending an approved off-site activity or is receiving special off-site tuition.
- The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit.
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance.
- The pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion (e.g. if a pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling).

Absence should be **unauthorised** if:

- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday.
- No explanation is forthcoming.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings (the guidance suggests that absence in such cases should only be granted in exceptional circumstances).
- The pupil is shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is absent for unexceptional special occasions (e.g. a birthday).

Leave of Absence during Term Time

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance at school. Changes in legislation in 2013 make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Therefore holidays during term time, including leave to visit family living overseas, may not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances which can be evidenced.

Exceptional circumstances might include:

- for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time if the holiday will have minimal disruption of the pupil's education;
- when a family needs limited time to spend together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- attendance at a funeral or wedding of a close relative; and
- attendance at the graduation award of a parent or sibling;

Exceptional circumstance, according to the Department for Education do not include:

- financial considerations such as the availability of cheap holidays;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods;
- overlap with beginning or end of term; and

- visiting family living overseas.

All parents will be asked to write to the Headteacher prior to a decision being made asking for documentary evidence of the exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher may consult with a nominated Governor where decisions are complex. Advice from the Local Authority may also be sought.

Procedures for Following up Absence

- If a pupil is marked absent without an explanation being forthcoming, office staff will make every effort to contact the parents immediately. Repeated, unsuccessful attempts will be reported to the Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher by 10am.
- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent, the Headteacher will write to the parents and invite them to attend a meeting at school.
- If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence without a satisfactory explanation from the parent, the Headteacher will write to the parents.
- If a pupil is persistently absent (or late) and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Attendance and Pupil Support Service during his/her consultation visit. This could result in a fixed penalty notice (Subsection (1) of Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act) or legal action (Section 444 Education Act 1996).

All messages regarding absence/lateness are to be recorded directly onto the electronic registration database system.

The Head teacher in conjunction with the Attendance Improvement Officer would be responsible for making the referral to Hospital and Home Education for any pupil likely to be absent for a prolonged period due to medical issues.

The school follows the Hertfordshire County Council and Diocese of Westminster guidance on Exclusions.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- Our Lady School will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- A broad and balanced curriculum will be offered to all pupils. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning objectives are matched to pupils' needs.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice.
- The school issues certificates for rewarding good attendance on a termly basis and at the end of each school year.
- High attendance rates for particular year groups are celebrated during assemblies.
- All parents are notified in writing of their child's attendance rate in the annual school report.
- Pupils whose attendance is a cause of concern will be set targets for improvement. The class teacher will monitor and review these targets.
- Parents will be regularly reminded (via newsletters, parents' evenings, etc.) of the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will (when appropriate) have work sent home to them.

The Headteacher will:

- The Headteacher will have meetings with the school's Attendance Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- Make an annual report to the school's governing body on attendance matters and will include attendance data on the termly reports to governors.
- Review progress towards attendance target annually.
- When appropriate, liaise with other agencies - Educational Psychology Service, Social Services, Child and Family Guidance, etc. - when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

Pupils who are Persistently and Severely Absent

Persistent absence occurs when a child's attendance is at or falls below 90%. Severe absence occurs when a child's attendance is at or falls below 50%.

Absenteeism at this level will considerably damage a pupils educational prospects and the school will work alongside parents/carers to tackle this issue. If a child is persistently absent the school will contact parents in writing and offer a meeting to discuss support. We aim to work with parents to identify additional targeted support to remove barriers. Where necessary, we will work with the Local Authority and other appropriate agencies. Should improvements not be seen in a child's attendance, the school will request medical documentation evidencing reasons for the child's absence. Should this not be provided or the school not be satisfied with forthcoming explanations, absence will not be authorised and parents will be informed.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Our Lady School follows Hertfordshire County Council's Penalty Notice for Truancy Code of Conduct and procedures.

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added two new sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

Under new legislation penalty notices may be issued where the absence is unauthorised. A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures. It is particularly useful as a sanction at an early stage before attendance problems become entrenched and where the Local Authority considers that a prosecution would not be appropriate as a first action.

- We expect parent/carers to work with us to address attendance problems.
- If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day=1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term (including unauthorised holidays), the Headteacher may ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice.
- The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days.
- There is no right of appeal by parents against a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- If the penalty is not paid the Local Authority may prosecute parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance.

Further information on penalty notices is available at www.thegrid.org.uk/administration/pupil_welfare/attendance or from the local Attendance Team Manager.

The Use of Legal Action

If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school), the LA will serve a School Attendance Order under Sections 437 - 439 of the Education Act 1996.

If a pupil, who is registered at a school, fails to attend that school regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Welfare Officer and the school fail to secure that pupil's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the pupil under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the pupil's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance. If 'exceptional mitigating circumstances' are not deemed to exist then cases which remain open for more than 24 weeks will be referred for legal action. Legal action will, however, be taken earlier when appropriate.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the AWO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date. In cases where parents wilfully withhold a pupil from school, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at effecting a return to satisfactory school attendance, the ISL Attendance Team will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance, will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced. The Attendance Team will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the pupil's poor attendance will be explored;
- the attitudes of the parent and pupil towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted the AIO will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the pupil's attendance at school .

Children missing education

A child is missing from education if they are of compulsory school age (age 5-16), do not have a school place and no alternative education arrangements have been made for them. Should a child believed to be missing from education comes to the school's attention, a CME referral will be made to The Children Missing Education Officer (CMEO). The CME Officer keeps a record of all children reported missing from education. The referral procedure for children believed to be missing from education should be followed by all Hertfordshire County Council staff and all schools and partner agencies. Children are tracked until they return to suitable education.

Attendance codes, descriptions and meanings

Code	Full name	Description
The student is counted as present.		
/ or \	Present am or pm	Present in school during registration.
L	Late	Late arrival before the register has closed
The student is counted as present, at an Approved Educational Activity.		
B	Educated off Site	The student is at an off-site supervised educational activity approved by the school.
P	Sporting Activity (Approved)	Pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.
V	Educational trip	A residential trip organised by the school or a supervised strictly educational trip arranged by an approved organisation.
The student is counted as absent, authorised.		
C	Other Authorised Absence	Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence.
E	Excluded	If a student is excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked E, for up to the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period (referred to as 'suspensions' by the DfE from Autumn 2021) or permanent exclusion.
H	Family Holiday (Agreed)	A leave of absence for a family holiday is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.
M	Medical/Dental Appointments	The student is absent due to a medical or dental appointment that could not be made outside of school hours.
R	Religious Observance	The student is absent for religious observance on a day designated by the religious body.
T	Traveller Absence	Used when Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) or New Travellers are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school.
I	Illness	This Illness code can be used for any form of illness, if you

		don't want to distinguish Covid-19 illness.
I01	Illness	This code maps to the statutory mark of I. This is for students absent due to non-coronavirus related illness (unless the truthfulness of the claim is in question). This code should not be used for medical or dental appointments.
I02	Confirmed case of Covid-19	This code maps to the statutory mark of I. This is for pupils who have a confirmed case of coronavirus.
The student is counted as absent, unauthorised.		
G	Family Holiday (Not Agreed)	The Holiday was not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the headteacher.
N	No Reason	The reason for the absence has not been provided. If no reason for an absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time, it should be changed to O.
O	Unauthorised Absence	If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.
U	Late (After Register Closes)	Schools should keep registers open for a reasonable amount of time, after which the student should be marked with a U.
These codes are not counted so will not affect attendance figures.		
D	Dual Registration	The student is registered at another school and attends it during this lesson e.g. students at a pupil referral unit. Schools should only record attendance and absences for sessions the pupil is scheduled to attend at their school.
X	Non-statutory school age absence	Sessions non-compulsory school-age children are not expected to attend. This code should only be used for early years students who have not yet passed the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday.
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	The school is closed due to an unavoidable cause or the student is unable to travel to the school. It can also be used where the pupil is in custody (for less than four months). This code is collected for statistical purposes but does not contribute to your attendance figures.
Z	Pupil Not On Roll	This code can be used when setting up registers in advance of pupils joining. Schools must take attendance for pupils from the first day the student should be attending the school.

#	School Closed To Pupils	This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as if the school is used as a polling station.
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Our Lady Catholic Primary School

Old Hale Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1XT

Leave for exceptional circumstances application form

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance at school. Changes to legislation in 2013 make clear that Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Holidays in term time can disrupt the educational progress and interrupt continuity of teaching and learning. If you wish to ask the Headteacher to authorize leave for exceptional circumstances please complete this form. Requests will only be authorized where there is evidence of exceptional circumstances. Applications must be made prior to the absence being taken. You will be asked to attend an interview with the Headteacher to discuss your application.

If you remove your child from school without approval, their absence will be documented as unauthorized and may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

Name of child(ren):		Class(es):	
I am applying for leave of absence for my child(ren) for the following reason/s:			
From:		To:	
Number of days my child(ren) will be absent from school:			
This cannot be taken during the school holidays because:			
Evidence of exceptional circumstances: <i>You may attach any other documentation evidence if you feel this would help us to make a fair decision.</i>			
Has your child had any leave of absence in previous years: YES/NO If yes, please give details:			
Signed:			
Date:			
To be completed by the Headteacher and returned to parents			
Child's Name and Class:			
Leave of absence requested from to (dates)			
Total number of days			
Child's attendance (%) and number of missed sessions in the current academic year:			

Child's attendance (%) and number of missed sessions in the last academic year:			
Holiday taken in previous academic year(s):			
Academic Year	Year Group	No. of sessions	No. of days
Headteacher/Governor comments:			
<p>Having considered your request fully, my decision is that leave of absence is:</p> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Approved – the absence will be recorded as authorized </div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Not approved – if taken , the absence will be recorded as unauthorised </div>			
<p>Signed:</p> <p>Date:</p>			