



Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School

Attendance and Welfare Policy

2021



Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School Attendance and Welfare Policy

Our Lady of Lourdes

General Procedures

- All registers completed by 9.00am and must be returned to the office by 9.10am. In the afternoon, registers are completed by 1.10pm and returned to the office by 1.15pm

- Teachers must ensure that all children arriving late who have not been marked in the morning register report to the school office.
- Children who arrive after registration has closed (9.00am) are marked late (L).

- Parents/carers are requested to notify the school by 9.30am if their child is late or absent.**
- Parents/Carers must advise the school office if their child will arrive after 9.00am. If this is not the case children will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U) after 9.30am for the part of the day they have missed.**

- Children's attendance will be recorded by the attendance leader by 9.30 am and parents/carers of those without recorded reasons will be contacted by the school
- Parents/Carers are required to supply a note explaining any absences

Monitoring

Attendance for all pupils below 92% is monitored monthly by Attendance Leader and EWO. Headteacher informed of findings.

Names logged of all those children with below 92% attendance.

If there is no significant improvement in next month, the school will send out a letter informing parents/carers that child's attendance will be monitored.

If there is no significant improvement parents will be invited to an Attendance Support Meeting with the Headteacher and Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). The EWO will inform parents of possible future action and try and support them in order to improve attendance.

- Attendance Leader will inform Headteacher of classes with highest attendance termly. These will be celebrated.
- Attendance Leader to track number of authorised and unauthorised absences half termly and inform Headteacher.
- Attendance leader will advise Headteacher of specific group's attendance half termly.

Exceptional Circumstances

- Requests for leave of absence during term time will generally not be permitted. However in the event of exceptional circumstances for example medical reasons or a specific family issue such as bereavement these will be considered.
- Only a written request to the Headteacher for an exceptional circumstance will be considered.
- A request by email sent to the Headteacher for an exceptional circumstance will not be considered.
- Decisions will be made on a case by case basis and requests for absence may be refused and therefore unauthorised.
- In line with the Department of Education Guidance **and Brighton & Hove City Council Code of Conduct Autumn 2018**, any parents/carers removing their child during term time for an unauthorised holiday will be referred to the local authority and may be issued with a fixed penalty notice fine.

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This policy reflects the vision and aims of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School by

- Encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential.
- Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.

Principles

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote good attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a legal responsibility to make sure that their children attend school regularly and punctually. Staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance. to ensure that all children attend school regularly whenever possible.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school or failing to secure a child's regular attendance at school without a good reason is a criminal offence by the parent/carer.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carer and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Expectations

We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school regularly and on each day the school is open to pupils;
- Arrive punctually;
- Attend all the required lessons and engage with the education being provided;
- Arrive at school appropriately prepared for the day;
- Discuss promptly with their class teacher, or the Headteacher, any problems that might deter them from attending school.

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We expect that all parents/carers/persons who have day to day responsibility for the children will:

- Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school each day punctually and properly prepared for the school day;
- Contact the school whenever the child/children is/are unable to attend school, on the first day of his/her/their absence, and send a note on his/her/their return to school;
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school.

We expect that school staff will:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils, twice daily;
- Monitor every pupil's attendance;
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible on the first day of absence where no message has been received to explain the absence;
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes giving a reason for the absence and the likely date of return;
- Emphasise the importance of good attendance and take positive steps to encourage it;
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children, a safe learning environment and a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns;
- Make initial enquiries of parents/carers of pupils who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the school's and the LA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance;
- Refer irregular or concerning patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Officer;
- Meet, where possible, the requirements of the UN Convention – The Rights of the Child, by ensuring that children are consulted in all decisions that relate to them.
- Provide an engaging curriculum and learning environment that encourages children to want to attend school of their own volition. A 'wow' factor to learning that children will not want to miss.

The school's attendance target for the academic year 2020-21 is 97%

The school has adopted the following attendance targets and special projects:

- In order to support and celebrate good attendance for all children, we have adopted a reward initiative where we celebrate attendance in assemblies. We talk about the importance of attendance on welfare and success. This initiative is designed to encourage children to regularly attend school and raise the profile of good attendance. Alongside certificates for learning behaviours, attendance certificates are used to celebrate those with the best attendance and those who have the most improved attendance on an individual basis.

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- We also endeavour to encourage attendance:-
 - By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment;
 - By responding promptly to a child's or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils;
 - By marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration using the SIMs system. If pupils arrive at school after the close of the register without a written explanation, the lateness will be recorded as a late arrival L code. If a child arrives after 9.30am an unauthorised absence will be recorded as a U code and the pupil's name recorded in the late book in case of a fire drill;
 - By publishing and displaying attendance statistics in the newsletter and on the website;
 - By monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Education Welfare Officer if the irregular attendance continues.

Procedures for parents to follow

It is expected that a child will arrive ready to start school at 8.50am. The doors open at **8.40am** and the children make their way to the infant playground (or hall if wet). At 8.45am children will make their way to class. The register will be taken between **8.50am** and **9.00am**.

If a child arrives after **9.00 am** they will be marked as 'late' and will need to sign in at the office.

When a child is absent from school due to illness, parents/carers must telephone the school as early as possible on the first morning of absence, detailing the illness. When the child returns to school, parents/carers must provide a letter detailing the sickness and absence period. If the child does not come to school by **9.30am** the parent will be contacted by the school and this will be noted. If a child arrives after 9.30am they will be recorded as 'Late after the close of the Register' which is an unauthorised absence where the school has not been informed by the parents/carers in advance with a reason and evidence. If the school is unable to contact the parent of the absent child, safeguarding procedures will be followed as detailed in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

If punctuality does not improve they will be referred to the EWO who will investigate and monitor the child's attendance. Parents/carers whose children arrive persistently late for school are at risk of receiving a fixed penalty notice fine, in line with BHCC;s Code of Conduct re Fixed Penalty Notices.

Changes to leave of absence and penalty notices from September 2017

The school term dates for Brighton and Hove are published a year in advance and are available on the BHCC website.

Brighton & Hove City Council published an amended Code of Conduct around Fixed

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Penalty Notice fines for unauthorised absence from school which Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School is committed to following. This Code of Conduct is available publically on the Brighton & Hove Council website.

Authorising absence

Amendments have been made to the 2006 pupil registration regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013.

Schools can no longer grant up to 10 days' leave in special circumstances for the purpose of family holiday. The September 2013 amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and schools may now only grant leave in 'exceptional circumstances'. ***Headteachers may not grant any leave during school term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'.*** The Headteacher can now request that the local authority issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to parents, when pupils are taken out of school for any holiday or leave of absence without school authorisation.

The DfE's advice on school attendance says that schools should consider each request individually, and should take into account:

- *The nature of the event for which leave is sought*
- *The frequency of the request*
- *Whether the parent gave advance notice*
- *The pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling*

There will be some situations which constitute 'exceptional circumstances' but as a generality we interpret 'exceptional' in this context as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child, which outweighs the loss of teaching time. The circumstances of any general requests will be considered by the Headteacher but in general, **requests will be refused.**

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as:-

- ***genuine illness of the pupil;***
- ***hospital/dental/doctor's appointment for the pupil;***
- ***major religious observances***
- ***visits to prospective new schools***
- ***external exams or educational assessments or provision***

Please note evidence such as an appointment card, copy of prescription, or third party letter will be required in some circumstances, and/or where the child's attendance is being monitored by the EWO.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These include:

- ***parents keeping children off school unnecessarily***

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- *truancy before or during the school day*
- *absences which have never been properly explained*
- *children who arrive at school too late to get a mark*
- *family holiday during term time*
- *trips abroad to attend cultural festivals*
- *shopping / day trip / visit to a theme park*
- *a birthday treat for child or other family members*
- *oversleeping due to a late night*
- *looking after other children / other family member*
- *appointments for other family members*
- *prison visit to partners/relatives*
- *car breaking down for the whole day or other transport issues.*

When leave of absence is requested a letter must be sent to the school office and submitted for consideration by the Headteacher on behalf of the school governors, no less than 4 weeks prior to the requested date. Consideration will then be given to the request and the circumstances noted. In general the request will be refused in line with Government policy but every letter will be judged on individual merit and with compassion. **For general guidance any activity, holiday or event that can be arranged during the annual 13 week holiday time will not be authorised during the school term.**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the Deans Partnership. The EWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, the EWO can use court proceedings to prosecute parents under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence

These can be issued for unauthorised holiday or for persistent lateness. Amendments have been made to the 2007 penalty notices regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which also come into force on 1 September 2013.

From September 2013, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days

The amendments reduce the timescales for paying the fines for unauthorised absence. From September 2013, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. These penalties apply per child who is absent within a family. The fines also apply to both parents or carers who have responsibility for the child. For a family with three children at the school, paying within 21 days, this would be £360 (£60 for three children = £180 x two parents = £360). For a family with 3 children at school, paying after 21 days, but before 28 days, this could be £720 (£120 for three children = £360

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x two parents = £720). If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the local authority is then obliged to consider prosecution of parents/carers in the Courts for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school they inform Our Lady of Lourdes School staff as soon as possible.

A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
- The address of the new school;
- The new home address, if it is known.

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. If a parent / carer appears to have removed their child from school or the child has completely stopped attending without providing the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Monitoring

- Attendance of those below 92% is monitored monthly by the school's attendance officer and EWO. The Headteacher is then informed of these children's names and reasons for their absences
- If after the next monthly monitoring a child's attendance continues to be below 92% the "School Tracking letter" will be sent informing parents/carers of concerns around attendance.
- If there is no improvement, a formal meeting will be arranged with parents/carers and the Headteacher and the EWO. The EWO will inform parents/carers of possible future action and try and support them in order to improve future attendance.
- All schools are required to set an attendance target by the Educational Welfare Officer. Our Lady of Lourdes Attendance Target is 97%. The Attendance Leader will track those below this target and this will be monitored by the Headteacher on a half termly basis.
- The Attendance Officer will inform the Headteacher of those with 100% attendance half termly.
- The Attendance Officer will inform the Headteacher of authorised and unauthorised absences every half term and these will be tracked.
- The Attendance Leader will inform the Headteacher of the attendance of children in specific groups for example boys and girls, Ever 6, SEN etc
- This information will be included in the Headteacher's Report for governors to monitor.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

The Headteacher – Paul Barber
Attendance Secretary – Miss Joanne Dow
Safeguarding Lead and InCo – Zoe Garbarz

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Appendix One

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

Term-time holiday

The **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006** used to allow headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a **family holiday** during term time in “special circumstances” of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers could also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Amendments have been made to the 2007 Regulations in the **Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children’s regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents used to pay £60 if they paid within 28 days; or £120 if they paid within 42 days.

Amendments to 2007 regulations reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

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Appendix 2a – absence concern letter 1

(Headed Paper)

(Address)

(Date)

STI

Dear

Forename surname (Class)

As a school we regularly review the attendance of all pupils and at the latest review «**Forename**»'s attendance has been flagged as being lower than the expected satisfactory level for the term so far. I enclose a copy of his/her attendance certificate for your reference.

I understand that the school may be aware of the reason for the absence which might well have been authorised, but the fact remains that their attendance figure is lower than the satisfactory level. We are therefore informing you that we will be keeping an eye on your child's attendance.

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School is taking attendance and punctuality extremely seriously for the benefit of the whole school community, and we hope that all parents and carers will support us in this. The link between attendance and attainment is very well documented and we are continually striving to enable all children to achieve their potential.

We will continue to monitor «**Forename**»'s attendance and hope to see an improvement over the coming weeks. If you would like to come and talk to me about this, I would be very pleased to meet with you. There may be circumstances affecting attendance which you need me to be aware of, or there may be ways the school can support you with this.

Yours sincerely

Mr Paul Barber
Headteacher

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Appendix 2b – absence concern letter 2

(Headed Paper)

(Address)

(Date)

Ref: ST2

Dear **<Name of parent/carer>**

Further to my letter dated **<date of ST1 letter>**, I have reviewed **<Name of pupil>**'s attendance and I have noted that there has been further absence from school.

While I still realise that you may have already provided reasons for any absences from school, I remain concerned about this and from now on, if **<Name of pupil>** is absent due to illness then the school will need copies of medical evidence (doctor's or hospital letters or notes, copies of prescriptions etc.) in order to authorise the absence. Failure to provide medical evidence means that the absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

Under the terms of the Education Act 1996, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may lead to legal proceedings being taken against you by the Local Authority. Alternatively the school may request that the Local Authority issues a penalty notice for £60 per parent per child to be paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale the penalty will increase to £120. If the higher penalty is not paid within 28 days, you may be prosecuted.

If you have any queries or if there are any ways that you feel the school can support you in ensuring that your child attends regularly please contact the School office on 01273 306980 and I would be happy to meet with you.

Yours sincerely

Mr Paul Barber
Headteacher

Appendix 3 – punctuality concern letter

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(Headed Paper)

(Address)

(Date)

Dear Parent/Carer

(Childs Name)

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school both regularly and punctually and failure to do so can result in a referral to the Education Welfare Service.

I am concerned about the number of occasions when ***(Child's Name)*** has been **late** for school. As you will see from the attached Attendance Certificate, ***(Child's Name)*** has been late (***number of half days/sessions***) since September.

Being late for school may affect ***(Child's Name)*** in the following ways:

- It can be embarrassing to arrive late and have to walk into a room full of children already settled in class.
- They will miss either important time of registration or the beginning of a lesson when instructions have already been given to the class.
- They may start the day feeling confused and anxious.
- Poor punctuality can be habit forming and might affect future attendance.

I would now like to request that ***(Child's Name)*** arrives to school on time and be ready to go in to ***(his/her)*** class for 8.50am. It is important that we meet to ascertain if there is an underlying issue that may be affecting ***(Child's name)*** punctuality. I would like to propose the following dates / times (insert 3 choices). Please contact the school office to confirm which appointment time suits you best.

I would also like to inform you that the school's attendance leader will be monitoring ***(Child's Name)*** punctuality.

May I direct you to the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy that is available on the school website. This outlines the school's expectations and monitoring procedures with regard to punctuality.

Yours sincerely

Paul Barber
Headteacher