

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School



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| <b>Approved by:</b>        | Governing Body | <b>Date:</b> Autumn 2014 |
| <b>Last reviewed on:</b>   | Autumn 2020    |                          |
| <b>Next review due by:</b> | Autumn 2022    |                          |

## **Introduction:**

Regular attendance at school promotes pupils well-being, maximises progress in learning and helps pupils reach their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. It is our duty to promote 100% attendance for all children. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that our pupils are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

All children have the right to an education and we have put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are most successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training

The Governing Body and Head teacher, in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at school.

As a school we aim to:

- maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 95%, pupils not of statutory school age will be subject to the same procedures as the whole school,
- ensure that attendance is regularly monitored,
- follow up and closely monitor the absence of persistent non-attenders,
- maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

Parental Responsibility - Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk. The school might share the attendance percentage with parents at each parents' consultation meeting and more frequently where there are concerns.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding matter so that all parties know that your child is safe. Pupils are expected to arrive between 8.40am and 8.50am, when the school gates are open. All pupils who arrive late must report to the school office where they are registered.

Parents can help us by:

- telephoning the absence line, 0208 575 5344, on the first morning of all absences before 9.00 am with the reason;
- arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school holidays;
- sending in a note explaining the reason for absence on your child's return to school after an illness;
- keeping us updated by telephone, letter or email if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness;
- discuss with school office/class teacher any planned absences well in advance and only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance by completing the leave of absence form.

We will:

- promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities;
- follow our procedure for checking and marking registers;
- follow up unexplained absences by phone calls to parents on the first morning of absence;
- log any reasons for absence received by phone, email or personal visit;
- consider any absence in line with this policy and Government's guidance before authorising or not;
- remind parents of pupils with attendance below 90% that their child is then considered a persistent absentee;
- ask parents to provide medical proof if their child is absent from school immediately before or after a school holiday.

Punctuality:

- registration is at 9.00 am for all children from Nursery to Year 6.
- late arrival can cause children to feel anxious or upset;
- it is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day;
- if children miss this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for the child.
- parents of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time-keeping and how this may be achieved.

Arrival after the close of registration is marked as unauthorised absence in line with the government's guidance.

As part of the safeguarding procedures of the school, children who remain uncollected at the end of school time, the child will be placed in our After School Club. A fee for this provision will be charged to the parent.

Action for low attendance and Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

- In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.
- Prior to the engagement of Ealing's Education Social Worker (ESW), the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupil's absence. It may also set up a parent meeting to discuss the pupil's absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for ESW involvement.

Attendance thresholds

96%+ High

Excellent attendance. This will help all aspects of your child's achievement and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.

95 - 96% Above average

Good attendance. We would like parents to focus on improving attendance to move to excellent attendance at school.

94 - 95% Average

Overall attendance is broadly average. Attendance may begin to affect your child's achievement at school.

93 - 94% Below average

Poor attendance is likely to affect achievement at school. School contact parent directly to seek ways of working together to improve attendance.

### Below 93% Low

Absence is causing serious concern. It is highly likely to affect attainment and progress and is disruptive to the child's learning. Meetings between home and school to share strategies for improvement will be called. If improvement is not achieved a referral is made to the (ESW). A Fixed Penalty Notice will be considered where absence is not authorised.

For all children, we have a stepped approach to taking action. It will not always be appropriate to progress through all of these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed.

- responsible staff will use discretion and consider each case carefully;
- where there has been no contact from parents, we will initiate first day calling for all pupils;
- for pupils with attendance below 90% there will be a discussion with the ESW at our regular half termly meeting;
- we will monitor trends in pupil attendance and punctuality, including our vulnerable groups;
- we will request for parent/carer to meet with school staff;
- if appropriate, will initiate procedures to access support from other agencies.

Education Social Worker (ESW) actions may include:

- home visits,
- multi agency meetings,
- issuing a parenting contract,
- sign posting to supportive agencies,
- issue a Fixed Penalty Notice,
- court action for poor attendance.

### Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

**Authorised Absence** - An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note, email or telephones the school to explain the absence.

**Religious Observance** - One day per year will usually be classified as authorised for religious observance.

**Unauthorised Absence** - An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Head teacher. Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation has been given. Unauthorised absences are an offence and can be liable to legal action or a fixed penalty fine. The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that will not be authorised:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily,
- absences that have not been properly explained,
- travel during term-time, including family holidays, that have not been agreed,
- repeated or persistent non-specific illness, for example, 'poorly/unwell',
- absence of other siblings if one child is ill,
- absence because a parent is ill (alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school),
- oversleeping,
- inadequate clothing/uniform,
- confusion over school term and holiday dates,
- medical and/or dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason,
- child's and/or family birthdays,
- any routine family event or trip, for example, shopping.

- Where absence claimed as illness occurs either side of a school holiday, medical proof will be sought. Without this proof the absence will not be authorised.

The school will instruct the Local Authority to issue a Fixed-Penalty notice for any unauthorised travel during term-time.

#### The law

Parents have a statutory duty to ensure that their children are properly educated. When your child is registered at a school, parents, carers or guardians must ensure the regular and full time attendance of their child. Parents are warned that if they take their child out of school without permission the Local Authority has the power to issue Fixed-Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absences. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent and for each child. The Penalty is £120 payable within 28 days, but reducing to £60 if paid within 21 days. (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2004). If holiday absence is repeated, matters can escalate and fines can be increased to both parents.

#### Authorising Absence

Only the Head teacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. At the Head teacher's discretion, circumstances may be considered as 'exceptional circumstances' and authorised as an absence from school. Individual circumstances are considered on a case-by-case basis. In order that the absence is authorised the Head teacher will consider whether:

- the absence is/was unavoidable,
- and, beyond the control and/or decision making of parents.

The Head teacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

#### Leavers and Children Missing Education

The school has a responsibility to safeguard pupils from harm. This includes knowing and taking reasonable steps to check the destinations of leavers. If your child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6 to go to High School, parents are asked to:

- give the school full information about their plans including date of move, new address or at least the town you will be moving to, new school and start date when known, and reasons for moving (a form is available at the school office),
- confirm the school has your current mobile phone number,
- let us know when you move.

When pupils leave and parents have not given us the above information, and we cannot contact the parent, then your child is considered to be a Child Missing Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations to try to track and locate the child. By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided

#### New admissions to school

Reception joiners, parents of pupils whose attendance in nursery has fallen below 90% will be invited into school to meet with the ESW to discuss how attendance can be improved.

#### Rewards for Positive Attendance

The main benefit of regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured. We promote positive attendance through:

- Individual children, certificates are awarded at the end of each school year for 100% attendance. This is celebrated in the final whole school assembly.
- Classes, fortnightly certificates issued for the classes with the highest attendance, also published to our website.

Monitoring Summary attendance information is reported to governors at least termly by the Head teacher.

### **SUMMARY**

The school is committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as

possible. The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote excellent attendance. If a child is not in regular attendance, he or she is being deprived of the right to full-time education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.