

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School



**Approved by:** Governing Body

**Date:** Autumn 2020

**Last reviewed on:** Autumn 2024

**Next review due by:** Autumn 2026

**Designated Senior Lead for Attendance: Miss K Coll Contact details: 0208 575 5344**  
**School Attendance Officer: Ms K Franey Contact details: 0208 575 5344**

**Regular attendance is defined to be in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.**  
Supreme court Ruling April 2017

**Regular attendance is attendance at school on each day the school is open for the pupils unless there is an ‘authorisable’ reason to be absent;** (registration regulations 2006 (amended). Section 444 of the education act 1996). “If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.” A pupil’s Unauthorised Absence is an offence for the **parent**.

**As a school we aim to:**

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance and good time keeping for all children and groups of children
- Maintain a low rate of persistent and severe absenteeism (<90% and <50% attendance)
- Maintain parents’ and pupils’ awareness of the importance of efficient and fulltime attendance.
- Help your child attain their full potential academically and socially

**Good attendance is important because:**

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, schoolwork, and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular attendance encourages responsible learning habits and prepares children for higher education and for their working life.

*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% Good*

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

*93% - 95% 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.*

**As a parent you can help us by:**

- Ensuring your child attends school on each day the school is open for the pupils unless there is an ‘authorisable’ reason to be absent. Only the school can authorise an absence
- Phone in to the school by 9am on each day of absence, with a reason for an absence

- Provide a timely reason, satisfactory to the school, for an absence; otherwise, the absence will remain unauthorised
- Arranging (where possible) all non-emergency medical and dental appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.
- Do not plan any holidays during term time
- Keeping the school updated by telephone, email, or letter of any changes of circumstances.
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers, email addresses and emergency contact details

**Absence should only happen when:**

- a) Your child is significantly/symptomatically ill and therefore unfit to attend school. There should be an observable symptom/s; 'feeling unwell' is not enough. We may ask for medical verification where absence claimed as illness is frequent, prolonged or where there are absences immediately before or after a school holiday.
- b) If there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty, the school will ask for evidence.
- c) If your child has a documented medical condition that hinders regular attendance, please let us know; the school will ask for evidence in such cases.

**If you are leaving** the area or changing schools, please complete a **Leaver's Form** (available at the school office). Schools and the local authority are obliged to track pupils from school to school, even if you are leaving to live abroad. Follow-up enquiries on inadequate information can be intrusive. As well as calls, enquiries include unannounced visits to your given address.

**What the School will do:**

- While we expect a parent to contact us with a reason for each absence, on occasions they might forget, we will endeavour to call, text, or otherwise contact parents. Schools have a safeguarding role so on occasion, home visits may be made by school staff or by the Local Authority Link Attendance Officer if a parent cannot be otherwise contacted.
- Where a child has a Social Worker, we will inform him/her of absences
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance or punctuality.
- The school will express 'a concern' either verbally or by letter. If attendance does not improve or explanations for absence or lateness are unsatisfactory, you may be invited to a meeting. The school will also outline what the attendance expectations are and what actions will follow
- We will seek to support you in various ways including:
  - a) We may invite you to participate in an Early Help and Assessment Plan (EHAP)
  - b) You may be invited to agree an Attendance Contract.
  - c) A referral may also be made to external partners, including the Local Authority School Attendance Service, whose officers visit the school regularly to review and support attendance and punctuality issues.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.

- Regularly inform parents about your child's attendance and absence levels.
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in the school literature, on our website, at open evenings, in the Home-School Agreement and in pupil's annual reports and during meetings.
- Publish our attendance data on the school website
- Acknowledge and reward good attendance and punctuality by: (Weekly, Termly and Yearly Certificates and awards)
- If your child has a documented medical condition, we will wish to discuss this with you. We will devise a care plan with you to support your child in school; this might also require us to refer to the school Nursing Team or on occasion contact your GP/health professional. The school will consider whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, and make referrals in a timely manner, working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support. In some cases, this may include a referral for Alternative Provision.
- Share attendance data regularly with the Local Authority Attendance Service
- Where attendance concerns persist, the school will hold more formal conversations with the parent/s (and pupil where they are old enough and able to understand and participate).
- Escalate the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Service (this includes unauthorised absence due to significant lateness) for prosecution, where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate.

### **Authorised Absence**

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences". That is when the school accept the reason given for absence.

We realise that there are rare and unavoidable occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent, such as sudden bereavement, unexpected parental illness, or a family crisis. If this happens, please let us know and we shall try to deal with the matter sympathetically. Following such incidents, parents are expected to make any necessary arrangements for their child to return to school as soon as possible (ideally the next day). If the absence is likely to be prolonged, parents must write to the Headteacher outlining the reasons.

Please note that when illness is a frequent reason claimed for absence, the school will ask for evidence other than a parent's word to allow for further authorisation of absences.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are not permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences". Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting for a delivery or repair
- Going for a family day out / Going shopping
- Because you have visitors
- Because you did not know school was open
- Interpreting or supporting a parent at a meeting
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Parent's illness (other than in an emergency)

- Where there is no explanation for an absence, or the school considers the reason given for the absence as unsatisfactory.
- Absence following or prior to a period of school closure (at the end and beginnings of terms and half terms) or following a period of authorised leave, unless satisfactory evidence to justify this has been provided
- Term time holiday

***Please be aware that unauthorised absence could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action. Sanctions for continued, unauthorised absence include warnings, penalty notices (fines) 3\****

### **Persistent Absence and Severe absence**

Once a child's attendance falls to 90% for whatever reason, he/she is automatically defined by the Department for Education (DfE) irrespective of the reason for absence as a **Persistent Absentee**. Once a child's attendance falls below 50%, they are termed **Severely Absent**. Both scenarios present a severe problem for pupils. Much of the work they miss when they are off school is never made up, these gaps in their learning leave children at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. Statistics show a direct link between poor attendance and under-achievement, particularly at GCSE.

Such low attendance is well below our expectations and as such, the school will work in partnership with the parent, the Local Authority, and other external partners to support parents to improve matters. In such cases, parents will be offered an Early Help Assessment and might be invited to agree a Parenting Attendance Contract with the school or the Local Authority as a way of managing improvement.

Unauthorised Absences are reported to the Local Authority (this includes absence due to significant lateness). The School Attendance Service may contact you where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem. The school will then work in partnership with you until matters improve. **Unauthorised absence could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action.** Sanctions for continued, unauthorised absence include warnings, penalty notices / fines prosecution in the magistrate's court or an education supervision order through the family proceedings court

*Payment of the penalty discharges liability for the offence. It is an alternative to prosecution. There are 2 levels of penalty notice - **£80 (if paid within 21 days of issue), and £160 (if paid later than 21 days but within 28 days)**. Failure to pay will result in prosecution in magistrate's court for irregular attendance, where, on conviction a fine of up to £1000 may be imposed as well as a record of criminal conviction.*

### **Exceptional Leave - Term Time Leave of Absence**

Amendments to the 2006 School Attendance Regulations make it clear that a Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time for holidays. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances (e.g., if there is an emergency) at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body. There is no entitlement to time off during term time.

Only in an exceptional circumstance will term time leave be considered. All leave is granted at the Headteacher's decision. Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence need to complete a request for pupil leave of absence form well in advance and before booking tickets or making travel arrangements (forms are available at the school office). Parents sometimes confuse

'telling' the school as being good enough; this is not so.

If a child goes abroad during a school holiday period, the parent must make definite arrangements so that they return in good time for school re-opening (term dates can be found on the school website). Absence claimed as illness before or after a school holiday must be reported during the period of absence and medical evidence produced on return to school. Otherwise, the absence will be regarded as unauthorised leave.

If you experience unexpected delays in returning from a trip abroad or within the UK, for whatever reason, the school will require documentary evidence accompanied with proof of original return dates i.e., tickets or an official travel plan showing intent to return on time. Medical Documentation should be in English. In certain circumstances, if a child remains abroad at the beginning of a school term and absence is extended, their school place may be at risk.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised, and you may be liable for a Fixed-Penalty Notice. Where a child's whereabouts cannot be established, he/she may be regarded as a 'Child Missing Education' and their place cannot be guaranteed.

Except for leave taken in an emergency, retrospective approval cannot be given without an application having been made. Satisfactory evidence of an emergency will need to be provided

A Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent in respect to each of their children in line with the local authority Fines protocol.

### **Punctuality - Parents remain responsible for their child's punctuality**

Good punctuality is a prerequisite to good learning and shows a respect between pupil, family, and school.

Parents remain responsible for their child's punctuality at the start of the school day. Arriving late to school on a consistent basis can have longer-term academic effects. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for the child. If showing up late to school becomes a habit, children may develop the notion that lateness is acceptable behavior. This belief can negatively impact their future work ethic and employment opportunities.

Morning registration is at 8.50am. You need to aim for your child to come through the school gate at 8.50am, at the latest.

Registers close at 9.00am

All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness, if known, will also be recorded. This information is discussed at regular meetings with the local authority Attendance Officer and can be made available to the courts in the form of a report should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness.

Arrival after the close of registration, where there is not an acceptable reason, such as a medical appointment, will be marked as a missed session; unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with the DfE guidance. The U code has the value of an unauthorised absence. When late arrivals are frequent or persistent, we will want to discuss this with you to assess what support or guidance you or your child may need. A referral may also be made to the Local Authority Attendance Service and or other external partners for additional support and monitoring.

Please remember that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in learning. A good understanding of the work and good progress can only take place when the child is in the classroom regularly and on time and ready to learn.

### **Leavers**

If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of Year 6) parents are asked to:

Give the school comprehensive information about your plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, who your child will be living with and your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing. A Leaver's Form is available from the school office, which you should complete. (A destination country or another named Local Authority without other details is not sufficient).

When a child leaves and we do not have information about where they have gone/will be educated, then he/she is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (formerly Social Services), the Police, benefits/council tax records and other agencies, to try to locate your child. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

### **Withdrawals:**

Parents who remain resident locally can only withdraw their children from school if they have a confirmed start date at another school or are undertaking to educate the child at home (Elective Home Education). If the latter, this must be confirmed in writing to the school by the parent. Pupils remain registered at school until such conditions are satisfied.

### **Legal Note**

*Parents have a legal duty to ensure efficient and full-time attendance at school of registered pupils of statutory school age (Education Act 1996). This is the legal requirement. The Local Authority School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families and other partnership agencies to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However, in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or are given a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine).*