

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Primary School



Approved by:	Maureen Gordon	Date: September 2014
Last reviewed on:	September 2018	
Next review due by:	September 2020	

A. PRINCIPLES

1. Attendance is one of the biggest influences on pupil attainment. The school will continue to work with parents and pupils to help secure ongoing levels of excellent pupil attendance. In the school's 2010 Ofsted Inspection, the inspectors judged pupil attendance as *Outstanding*.

2. Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Our Home-School Agreement sets out parental responsibilities on Attendance and Punctuality: '*We will ensure our child comes to school regularly and on time*'.

3. Every half-day absence from the school 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 from parents.

4. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or other unavoidable cause. Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes parents keeping children off school unnecessarily, truancy, absences which have never been properly explained by parents and children who arrive at school too late to get a mark for attending in the register.

5. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents 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.

6. Where problems arise with a child's attendance, the school will work with parents to resolve the problems together. If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the 'child' to the local authority education welfare officer who will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child. Parents or children may wish to contact the education welfare officer themselves to ask their advice (they are independent of the school) – contact details are available from the school office or by contacting the local education authority.

B. REWARDS

1. The school rewards good attendance by awarding special achievement certificates to children at an end of term Praise Assembly (a different certificate is designed for each new term). These are awarded to children:

- ☺ who achieve full attendance during the term;
- ☺ whose attendance is 97% or better during the term;
- ☺ whose attendance has shown a marked improvement from one term to the next.

2. During Departmental Praise Assemblies the class with the best attendance rate from the previous week receives a certificate in recognition of their achievement.

3. At the end of the academic year, special certificates and 'prizes' are awarded to those children who have achieved excellent attendance. Children who have not missed any time off school over the whole academic year are enrolled as life time members of the school's 100% Club. Photographs of the 100% Club members are taken each year and then remain on display in the library corridor.

C. PROCEDURES

1. Illness and Other Legitimate Reasons:

As we need to ensure our pupil attendance records are accurately maintained, the following procedures must be followed by parents for notifying us of a pupil absence:

- All absences must be notified to the school office before 9 am on the morning of the absence either by telephone or by email: pupilabsence@olovrc.com.
- Calls must be made daily unless a doctor's note has been produced for a period of time.

- If the school does not receive communication by 9 am on the first day of absence, parents of absent pupils will be telephoned by the school Office before 10 am.
- Immediately upon a pupil's return to school, an explanation for the absence should be sent to school either by letter or email to pupilabsence@olovrc.com.
- If no explanation is received within two weeks of the absence, the absence will be recorded on the pupil's record as unauthorised.

Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence of a child's illness, such as a doctor's note, may be requested. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time absence occurs; notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing valid reasons. The school will not authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, going on day trips, etc. Leave may be granted in an emergency such as in the case of a family bereavement. As far as possible any dental/medical appointments should be arranged out of school time.

Where a class teacher is concerned that a child is absent without a given reason, the class teacher will notify the school office staff. A telephone call will then be made to the parents to investigate the nature of the absence. If unsatisfied with the outcome of the telephone call, the class teacher will then inform their age phase team leader.

2. Leave in Term Time:

Current statutory legislation no longer permits the school to grant a leave of absence for a pupil to go on a family holiday during term time. Parents are expected to take children on holiday during the 14 weeks when the school is not in session. Any holidays taken during term time will be marked down as unauthorised and may result in a **Fixed Penalty Fine** and that extended absences without permission may put the child's place in the school at risk.

A leave of absence will only be granted for exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Headteacher. Leave for any reason may not be granted where children have already missed a lot of learning or where the proposed absence would be at a crucial time of the year e.g. at the beginning of the school year or during standard assessment tests.

Permission for foreseeable absences should be made using the school *Request for Pupil Leave Form* available from the School Office or the school web site.

3. Punctuality:

As pupil lateness impacts upon their own learning and upon the learning of others in the class, parents are expected to ensure that children arrive at school before 8.50 am which is the beginning of the school day. Parents are expected to ensure that children arrive at the school before the beginning of the school day i.e. before 8.50 am. A child arriving after the morning register is closed at 9.10 am will be marked absent for that session. Late arrival after registration without good reason is classed as unauthorised absence. Where children are brought to school late, the reason for lateness will be provided by the parents.

4. Concerns from Class Teachers:

Where a class teacher is concerned that a child is absent without a given reason, the school office staff will be notified by sending a memo in the register. A telephone call will then be made to the parents to investigate the nature of the absence. If unsatisfied with the outcome of the telephone call, the class teacher will then inform the relevant Team Leader.

5. Leavers (other than at high school transfer)

Parents of children who are leaving the school are expected to give details in advance of the move. Parents of pupils who cease to attend without prior notice will receive a phone call on each day until contact is made. If contact is not made or a reason for the non-attendance is not given after three days the school

will send a letter to the parent asking for confirmation of why the child is not at school. If the school continues to be unable to contact the parents a referral will be made to the 'Children Missing Education' officer'.

Parents can only withdraw their children from school if they have a confirmed start date at another school.

6. Reviewing Attendance Data:

On a fortnightly basis, the leadership team are provided with attendance data for individual pupils and for each class as a whole. The data is then analysed and any concerns regarding poor attendance are identified. If necessary, members of the leadership team then meet with the relevant class teachers to discuss the issue. Parents will be contacted as necessary with the aim of rectifying the situation. If there is no improvement or there are continuing concerns then the local authority Education Social Worker (ESW) is informed.

7. Persistent Absentees:

A letter of concern will be sent to parents when a child's attendance rate falls below 92%. If the child's attendance does not improve or falls below 90% parents will be contacted and asked to meet with the class teacher and a member of the leadership team to discuss how we can support the child to attend school more regularly. Frequent absences claimed as illness will need to be evidenced with a doctors' certificate.

D. 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.