

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Attendance and Punctuality Guidance

Agreed by Governors Sep 2018



ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Good attendance is the first step towards good pupil progress and achievement. We want to ensure that all pupils receive a full-time education to maximise their opportunities. Experience and research both locally and nationally demonstrates a clear link between good attainment and good attendance. Setting a clear policy for attendance and punctuality is an excellent preparation for later school years and future employment. Good punctuality and attendance shows respect for teachers and peers and supports pupils to be ready and willing to learn.

All school staff work with pupils and their families to ensure that all parents and carers have a clear understanding of the importance of attendance and punctuality in a child's education and that all pupils attend school punctually on every day of each term.

The school has a system of incentives and rewards which acknowledge the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and challenges the behaviour of those pupils and parents who do not.

To meet these objectives we will continue to foster good communication with pupils, parents, carers and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

THE TARGET

Our school intends to maintain its high levels of attendance each year. Our annual target for attendance is 95%.

OUR STATUTORY DUTIES

This policy is written in relation to the following acts of Parliament and guidance relating to attendance:

- Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Social Inclusion: Student Support, DfES Circular 10/99.
- Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- LB Camden Attendance Strategy 2007
- We will also take account of new legislation and initiatives.

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Leave should not be taken during term time except in exceptional circumstances, when authority should be requested from the Headteacher. Where unauthorised absence is taken, the school will automatically refer this to the Educational Welfare Service.

2. Parents and carers are asked to sign up to this policy in the signing of the *Home School Agreement*.
3. This policy also seeks to encourage punctuality. Children of working parents can attend Breakfast Club from 8am. Any child can attend Breakfast Club from 8.15am. The doors open at 8.40am for children to go to their classes and begin Early Morning Work. Registration is at 9am. Children arriving after 9.05 am are recorded as late. Where children repeatedly arrive late (three or more times a term), the school will set up a meeting between the Head teacher and in some cases, the Educational Welfare Officer, and the parent.
4. This same applies to punctual collection of children after school. The school day ends at 3.30pm (unless arrangements have been made for extended services). If a child is not in an after school club, collection times are recorded in the school office at or after 3.40pm. If the child is in an after school club, collection times are recorded after 4.50pm. If children are repeatedly collected late, the school will set up a meeting between the Head teacher and the parent.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

1. The school gives a high priority to conveying to parents, carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems, not least because these are very helpful when there is a problem with attendance.

Measures we take include:

- Holding induction sessions for all new parents and pupils
- Giving out attendance and punctuality information in some newsletters.
- Sending termly attendance reports to all governors
- Making all staff aware of the values and standards expected for school attendance and taught how to encourage school attendance
- Having a reward system for pupils in place to reinforce good attendance and make those who are punctual proud of their punctuality. We have individual 100% attendance certificates over a term and over a year
- Publishing term dates one year in advance and are communicated in the weekly newsletter and in a separate letter to every parent. Any changes in the term date schedule are communicated more than one month in advance and communicated in a letter to the parent of every child
- Ensuring Breakfast Club is available to all to support good punctuality
- Ensuring that all poor punctuality and poor attendance is followed up by the Head teacher

SHARING WITH PUPILS THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

Children receive guidance from teachers on an individual, class and school level about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. If a child has concerns about their attendance or punctuality they are encouraged to speak to their class teacher.

Children are encouraged to get to school in good time to start Early Morning Work.

Children are encouraged to go to bed at an appropriate time so that they are not tired the next day. They are encouraged to prepare for the school day on the night before as much as possible so they are not rushed in the mornings.

There are incentive schemes in place to promote good attendance and punctuality amongst the children.

The school council is consulted with to help develop initiatives to improve school attendance and punctuality.

Children who are regularly collected late at the end of the school day may be referred to Social Care after discussion with the EWO.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO HELP?

The school works with parents and carers to ensure excellent attendance and punctuality and recognises that parents have a crucial role.

If a pupil does miss school, parents/carers should inform the school of their child's absence and provide an explanation in writing as soon as possible. The nature of the explanation determines whether the school will authorise the absence or not.

EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE

The legal situation...

It is an offence to take unauthorised pupil leave during school term time.

From 1st September 2013, the government amended the regulations regarding term time pupil leave. Whereas in the past guidance from Camden made provision for leave (including holidays) within term time in special circumstances and at the discretion of the Headteacher, this will no longer be allowed. New regulations now state that **Headteachers must not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The new regulations also require that all applications have to be made in advance to the Headteacher by persons requiring leave of absence. Parents will have to prove to the satisfaction of the Headteacher that their request is due to exceptional circumstances and will need to be supported in all cases by documentary evidence.

Penalty notices

From 1st September 2013, the government have reduced the timescale for paying a Penalty Notice. The timescale for paying a **Penalty Notice is £60.00 within 21 days or £120.00 if payment is made within 28 days.**

If payment is not paid within 28 days the EWS is required to start proceedings against the parent in the Magistrates Court. If the case is proven in Court this can attract a fine up to £1000 and a criminal record.

Examples of requests that **do meet the exceptional leave criteria...**

A situation where a parent/carer has to book airline tickets the following day due to a family emergency such as a death. Documentary evidence such as a photocopy of the airline booking will be required.

Failure to return to school following a holiday due to airport delays. Documentary evidence of the delay such as a letter from the airline company will be required.

N.B If a pupil fails to return on the agreed date, it is an unauthorised absence. The pupil may, in some circumstances, lose their school place.

Examples of requests that **do not meet the exceptional leave criteria...**

Booking a family trip in advance to visit extended family who are unwell.

Booking a family trip in advance to attend a family event such as a wedding or funeral.

Why is pupil leave during term time unacceptable?

Pupils miss important lessons leading to 'gaps' in their understanding of key concepts. They often find it difficult to catch up on their return. This can have a serious impact on their academic attainment, particularly in mathematics. Teachers can use valuable time trying to help pupils to catch up following a period of pupil leave. This can have a negative impact on the attention given to other pupils in the class.

Pupils can find it challenging to manage adjustments to friendships and the class dynamic when they have missed key school events eg end of term or beginning of term events.

Parents often ask teachers to put together 'remote' learning programmes for pupils to use during their period of extended leave. This uses up teachers valuable time and can have a negative impact on the attention given to other pupils in the class.

Our school operates comprehensive and sophisticated individual intervention programmes (eg 1-1 level 6 attainment coaching). Pupil leave can result in valuable resources being wasted.

THE ROLE OF THE HEADTEACHER

The Headteacher carries out an attendance check and meets with the Educational Welfare Officer every week. All unauthorised absence, poor attendance and punctuality are discussed at this meeting. All actions arising from the meeting are recorded and parents are invited to a meeting with either the Headteacher or the Head teacher and Educational Welfare Officer the following week, if necessary. At the end of every term, all pupils who have attendance of less than 90% are discussed. Unless the school has documented evidence of illness, all parents of these children will receive a letter and will be expected to attend a meeting with the Head teacher and Educational Welfare Officer.

The Headteacher oversees the collection and reporting of attendance data and the publication of statistics and reports on attendance to parents, pupils, governors and the Camden Children Schools and Families Directorate (CCSF).

An attendance audit is carried out and reported on in June of each year.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

All class teachers have a responsibility to keep an attendance register. This is a legal document and must be completed accurately. The attendance register must be marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Absences are coded according to the information received from the parent of the child. The class teacher monitors the register daily and is sensitive to emerging patterns of absence and lateness.

Class teachers encourage patterns of punctuality and good attendance by praising those children who came to school each day and arrive on time.

The class teacher reports any concerns about a child's attendance or punctuality to the School Administration Assistant.

Class teachers should make positive links with parents and carers and promote good attendance and punctuality within the class.

THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

The administrative staff set up registers at the start of each academic year.

The administrative staff record late arrivals each day and take telephone calls from parents or carers concerning pupil absence. They send first day texts to pupil's homes regarding non-attendance. All vulnerable families (monitored by the school) are telephoned if there is no response. If a pupil is absent for more than 3 days, the administrative staff inform the Head teacher and continue to track ongoing absence.

Each week the administrative officer will print weekly registers for each class and enter the attendance data on the database.

Individual pupil attendance reports are compiled on the request of the Headteacher or the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). The administrative staff will also prepare termly and annual returns to the local authority and governors. The administrative staff may be directed to send letters out to parents where there is an attendance issue or where the Head teacher wishes to see the parent regarding attendance and/or punctuality.

The administrative staff assist the Head teacher in the collection of data for the Local Authority and DFE returns.

The administrative staff assists admissions by adding and removing children from the school roll where appropriate.

The administrative staff ensure that where medical evidence has been requested in order to authorise absences, such evidence is seen and recorded before authorising this absence. They also ensure that medical evidence is requested before authorising an absence the day before or after school holidays or a religious observance.

The administrative staff maintain up to date knowledge of the attendance codes, the legal guidance and the Local Authority's guidance on matters regarding attendance and punctuality.

The administrative staff systematically monitor applications by parents and carers for exceptional leave. They ensure that all applications are given to the Head teacher for consideration.

THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL WELFARE OFFICER (EWO)

The EWO is responsible for enforcing school attendance in all Camden schools. The EWO monitors school attendance registers and holds consultation meetings with the Headteacher and obtains referrals from the school. The EWO may meet a parent/carer and child in school, write to parents/carers, arrange a home visit and refer to other professional agencies. The results of these interventions are reported to the school. Failure to comply with the interventions of the EWO can lead to a fine or magistrate court proceedings. This policy brings your attention to the right of the school to refer a child to EWS for persistent unauthorised leave who can issue a Penalty Notice.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS

There is a School Governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance and procedures whose responsibility it is to be aware of general attendance issues and along with the whole Governing Body inform and oversee school attendance performance initiatives.

Reports, statistics and initiatives to improve school attendance are shared with the Governing Body and documented in Governors meeting minutes.

ILLNESS, MEDICAL & DENTAL APPOINTMENTS

Advance notice of appointments can be recorded in the register ahead of the appointment. When the information is given by the parent or carer after the event, the register must be adjusted accordingly with the correct code. Parents and carers are encouraged to arrange appointments at the end of the school day and /or after the pupil has arrived in school and been marked in the register. Children should be returned to school after the medical appointment.

If a child misses the last day of a half term or term due to illness or the day back following a school holiday, that day will be unauthorised unless the school receives medical proof that the child was too ill to attend school on that day.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A LONG PUPIL ABSENCE?

The school is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of pupils returning after significant periods of absence and will support the smooth reintegration of pupils both academically and socially. In such circumstances the school works with parents, carers and pupil towards an agreed reintegration plan which may include opportunities for counselling and feedback, peer support and mentoring and an agreed review period.

THE SCHOOL TIMETABLE

Children must be in class by 9am .Children may go to their classroom to take part in early work' from 8.40am. Lessons start promptly at 9.00am.

School ends at 3.30pm. Parent and carers should meet children at 3.30pm unless extended hours arrangements are in place.

Each parent/ carer must complete a form with contact telephone number details and address of anybody who is designated to pick up your child from school. Should they wish to change this list of names the school will need written consent from the parent in advance.

Children in Year 6 are permitted to arrive and leave school unsupervised on the condition that the school has a permission letter from the parent.

A child cannot be picked up or brought to school by anyone under the age of 14. Children over the age of 14 who are themselves attending school which finishes at 3.30pm should not be in charge of picking up children from school if their school is further than 5 minutes travel time away from our school.

TERM DATES

School term dates are published one year in advance and can be found on the school website.

Staff training days (INSET days) are included in the term dates schedule. Parents or carers will receive written notice of any changes in term dates. Those changes are also published in the calendar on the weekly school newsletter.

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Request for exceptional Leave during term time

Please read the information below carefully.

If the leave you are requesting meets the exceptional category, please complete the question section of the form and arrange to meet with the Headteacher.

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If the leave that you are requesting meets the exceptional category, please complete the following questions and arrange to meet with the Headteacher.

I am requesting permission to take exceptional leave of absence for the child/children named below:

Name of child/ren _____

Year group/s _____

Period of absence: From _____ To _____

Number of school days absent _____

Date of return to school _____

Destination _____

Brothers and sisters requesting exceptional leave from other schools:

Names _____

School _____

Details of person to be contacted if your child does not return to school on the agreed date:

Name of contact person _____

Address of contact person _____

Telephone number of contact person _____

Reason for request of exceptional leave:

Date _____

Signature of parent/carer _____

