



Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School



Pupil Attendance Policy

Our Lady of Lourdes School timings:

Gates open: 8.40am

Class Registration opens: 8.40am

Class Registration closes: 8.50am

End of the school day: 3.15pm

Introduction and Background

Our Lady of Lourdes School values all its pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and punctuality and give appropriate support to resolve any difficulties.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and it is the headteacher, not the parent, who can authorise the absence.**



Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence disrupts a child's school routine, and frequent absences can significantly impact their learning and progress. Ensuring regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, and allowing a child to miss school without a valid reason is against the law and could lead to prosecution.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence examples:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- shopping trips;
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- their own or family birthdays;
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends;
- day trips;

Leave of Absence

Parents/carers will be asked to complete a '**Leave of Absence Form**' at least one month before any leave is required, with supporting evidence identifying why the leave has been requested.

A letter will be sent out with the decision made regarding the absence. If the leave of absence is not authorised the letter will include a warning that a penalty notice may be issued if the leave is taken.

The headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence.



Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and cooperation of parents to resolve this. All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent**'. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before **9.20 am**
- This can be done by leaving a voicemail on the school absence line, reporting a child's absence via the MCAS app or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we may discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised;
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before **9.20 am**
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us
- If we are unable to make contact with parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, in the interests of safeguarding
- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be "missing from education."

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to inconsistent attendance. Being on time is an essential life skill that will benefit children throughout their school years and beyond. Late arrivals disrupt lessons, and missing the start of the day can leave a child feeling unsettled and embarrassed, as well as causing them to miss important work and key messages from their teacher.



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How we manage lateness:

- Children arriving after **8.50am** are required to come into school via the school office where they will be signed in and the parent/carer must provide a reason for their lateness.
- At **9.20am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence;

Pupils with regular lateness:

- Letters to parents may be sent if punctuality/lateness becomes regular or reaches a large amount of schooling being missed
- A meeting may be arranged with the School Attendance Officer and Headteacher if this persists.

Attendance Interventions

Pupils with attendance between 96% and 90% attendance:

- Attendance will be closely monitored on a weekly basis by the school attendance officer
- Letters or emails may be sent to parents if patterns of absence occur

This action is rated Level 1

Pupils with attendance less than 90%:

- The parent will be notified via email or letter.
- If deemed necessary parents/carers will be invited in to attend a meeting in school with the Attendance Officer and the Local Authority Attendance Officer.
- Parents/carers may be requested to complete a parenting contract which will state that they agree to comply with specific requirements. The school will agree to provide the support needed to enable a parent/carer to comply.
- Parents/carers will be informed that no further absence will be authorised without supporting medical evidence.

This action is rated Level 2

- If this is not followed, the Local Authority Attendance Officer will assume responsibility and may impose sanctions such as Penalty Notices or initiate Prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

This action is rated level 3 and 4



Understanding barriers to attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services, a Child and Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils, however we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Parents are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact for more detailed support on attendance:

Name: Mrs Blainey Tel: 01702 475689 E-mail: office@ourladyoflourdes.southend.sch.uk

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for **£160**, reduced to **£80** if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular



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school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.”

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child’s overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Southend City Council Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, other than at the end of year 6, parents/carers are required to inform the school office of the new school name, address and start date. They will also need to provide the new home address and moving date, if applicable. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all of our pupils, even those who leave us.