

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING



**ST. URSULA'S  
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**ATTENDANCE, PUNCTUALITY AND LEAVE OF  
ABSENCE POLICY**

*"With God at the heart of our St Ursula's family, we welcome all as we learn and grow together"*

## Introduction

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and it is your duty to make sure that your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason is against the law and may result in prosecution.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

### **Aims of the Policy**

1. Assess needs of children whose school attendance is below expectation.
2. Promote punctuality and attendance.
3. Increase children's school attendance.
4. Act early to prevent Persistent Absence.
5. Identify children who are missing education.
6. Support vulnerable children to avoid exclusion.

## Why Regular Attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines and so it may affect the learning of others in the same class.

## Promoting Regular Attendance

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Ensure that our school has a welcoming environment.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Ensure that the curriculum is relevant, appropriate and interesting to the children.
- Involve children in the decisions that affect their lives.
- Monitor your child's attendance and punctuality rate and how this relates to their attainments every term.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class achievements and reward winning classes.
- Reward good attendance through individual stickers, certificates, class parties and entering a prize raffle or cinema trip if you have 100% attendance.
- Work with parents and pupils to address reasons for non-authorised attendance.

## Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/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 given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, make an appointment to see the Pastoral Lead - Mrs Said.

### Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority's Attendance, Admissions and Inclusion Officer.

### Illness, medical and dental appointments

If the school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness, the absence will be treated as authorised. If a child is off for 5 days or more due to illness then medical evidence **must** be provided. Without medical evidence the absences will be unauthorised. A parent/carer must phone the school on the child's first day of absence to inform them of the reason. If a reason

is not provided the absence will be marked as unauthorised. First day calling will take place, a phone call will be made by the Attendance Team if no prior phone call/email has been received by the school.

Advance notice of medical/dental appointments should be given wherever possible, preferably by an appointment letter or text from the medical practice. Pupils leaving/returning to the premises in session time must report to the school office where such movements are recorded for safety reasons. Where possible, medical appointments should be made out of school time.

If your child is absent due to vomiting/diarrhoea they must be absent for 48 hours following the last time they were sick.

#### **Request for Medical evidence:**

As stated above, if a child is off for 5 days or more due to illness we will request reasonable medical evidence. This will provide clarification to accurately record absence in our attendance register.

#### **Reasonable evidence:**

- Appointment note.
- Appointment confirmation (Text or email).
- Phone log that evidences call to surgery (Phone number visible) and a duration time consistent with a Doctor's consultation.
- Dated prescription.

We will request medical evidence for absences less than 5 days, where we have genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

#### **Causes for genuine and reasonable doubt:**

- Absence directly before or after school breaks.
- Call from an International number.
- International dial tone.
- Absent after request for leave was not agreed.

#### **Absence Procedures**

For safeguarding purposes, parents must telephone the school on every day of their child's absence unless the school has been notified that the child will definitely be absent for a specific period of time. If the school has not had a reasonable explanation for absence, a home visit may be carried out by a senior member of staff or the Local Authority's Attendance, Admissions and Inclusion Officer as part of our safeguarding procedures.

#### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact the school each day of absence by 9:00am.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Complete a home visit if we have not heard from you and cannot make contact.
- Send you a letter if your child's attendance has dropped to 93%.
- Send you a second warning letter if your child's attendance continues to drop.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority's Attendance, Admissions and Inclusion Officer if attendance moves below 90%.

Upon your child's return the school may require medical evidence as proof of illness if they are off for longer than 5 days. Additionally, an email or dated holiday ticket will need to be shown to confirm original return date (if a holiday has taken place).

### Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number – we need this in case of any emergency. At least 4 contact numbers should be provided.

### Havering Attendance, Admissions and Inclusion Team

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance, Admissions and Inclusion Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Authority.

### Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. 5 minutes late each day adds up to **3 days** lost every year. 15 minutes late is the same as being absent for **2 weeks** every year.

#### How we manage lateness:

The school gates open at **8:35am** and the school day starts at **8:45am**. We expect your child to be in their classroom by **8:45am** ready for registration.

In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after the gate closes at 8:50am they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but late. If a child has more than 6 lates or combined 30 minutes over a Half Term you will receive a letter warning you of this fact. If lateness persists you will receive a second warning letter. If lateness continues, we will refer the case to the Attendance and Behaviour Support Service.

### Punctuality

It is important for your child to arrive at school on time as lateness is detrimental to their learning and the learning of others. It is important to note that persistent lateness constitutes irregular school attendance in law. Registers will be taken at 8:45am, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as 'L' (late before registers have closed). Arrivals after 9:00am or 1:15pm will lose their mark and will be marked as 'U' (unauthorised absence – late after registers have closed). Figures of lateness will appear on their school report and attendance certificates. Below is a graph showing how arriving late to school every day over a school year adds up to lost learning time.

Times need to be abided to as lateness is causing cross bubbling amongst year groups.



### Reporting to parents

Pupil attendance and punctuality is reported to parents each half term through the school's pupil mid-term reports. Each report will provide parents with their child's attendance as a percentage and minutes late.

Pupils receive the following grading for their attendance:

97% & above	Outstanding
95% to 96.9%	Good
94.9% & below	Poor

### Holidays in Term Time

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law for Leave of Absence in term time for family holidays. The Governors and Local Authority **will not** authorise requests for family holidays and leave of absence in term time. The parent is guilty of an offence under S.444A Education Act 1996 if

they fail to accept these conditions.

Fixed penalty fines effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 will be issued per parent per child as follows:

- **1<sup>st</sup> Offence**

£80 fine – will be issued and would need to be paid within 21 days.

If payment is not received within 21 days, the fine will increase to £160 and must be paid within 7 days. Failure to pay the fine of £160 will result in prosecution in the magistrates' court.

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Offence within 3 years**

£160 fine – will be issued and would need to be paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the fine of £160 within 21 days will result in prosecution in the magistrates' court.

- **3<sup>rd</sup> Offence within 3 years**

Where a family is identified to be fined on a 3<sup>rd</sup> occasion within a 3-year period, these cases will be referred straight to the magistrates' court for prosecution

### **Cross Borough Checks**

In cases where a child has moved between local authority areas the authority for that area will be contacted to check whether a penalty notice / prosecution has been actioned.

### **Co-parenting**

A penalty notice can be issued to each parent or guardian liable for the attendance offence. This means if a child is residing with a parent and is taken on unauthorised leave with another parent or guardian, both would be issued with a penalty notice/fine regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence.

Absence during term time is potentially detrimental to the education of children and young people. Leave of absence is **NOT** an entitlement.

There are 175 non-school days every year. That is 175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is a clear procedure that needs to be followed when requesting leave of absence. Parents should only ***Request for leave to be absent in term time***, in extenuating circumstances. The Head Teacher would consider the following before making a decision to authorise / unauthorise leave. We request this is carried out fourteen days before the start date. Each request for leave to be absent will be considered carefully and individually.

- The child's previous attendance history.
- Age of the child.
- The child's stage of education.
- The time of year (SATs, exams).
- The nature of the trip (an exceptional experience).
- Whether the parents are restricted in terms of leave from their employer.
- Exceptional circumstances may apply to service personnel.
- When a family needs to spend time together at a time of crisis.

Where the school does not authorise the request and the child is then absent from school, the absence must be marked as unauthorised in line with Havering's Code of Conduct (Penalty Notices), unauthorised leave will be referred to the Attendance, Admissions and Inclusion Officer. A penalty notice will be issued in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

In cases of authorised absence where the parents keep a child away for longer than agreed, the extra time shall be marked as unauthorised.

### **Absence for Family Ceremonies or Religious Observance in Term Time**

Parents need permission for anything that means their child will be absent from school, these include weddings, baptism, funerals and religious observance. Regulations state that no term time leave of absence should be granted except in 'exceptional circumstances'.

Requests for leave in these categories must be made using the **Request for leave to be absent in term time** form 14 days before the start date or the leave will NOT be authorised.

### **Family Ceremony**

Leave of absence for family weddings, baptism etc. in term time are not deemed as 'exceptional circumstances' unless it is for an immediate family member i.e. sibling or parent. If you think you have a case to be considered you must apply 14 days in advance and provide evidence in the form of an invitation or order of service.

A parent/carer with whom the child resides must make the application even though the pupil may not be taking the proposed leave with them.

### **Religious Observance**

An application for a pupil to be absent that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body themselves (not by the parent) which takes place in term time may be granted if made 14 days in advance. If the parent applies for more days than the religious observance requires, the rest of the time will be unauthorised. If in doubt the school will ask the parent to provide evidence from the religious body.

### Important

The school takes a firm view on any absence during term time. Under new legislation introduced in 2013 the school cannot authorise any leave of absence during term time. If a student is absent prior or does not return after a school holiday (Half term, Christmas, Easter or Summer) the parent/carer will need to provide medical evidence to cover the absence. Failure to provide this evidence will result in the absence being marked as unauthorised and this will be referred to the Local Authority's Attendance, Admissions and Inclusion Offer.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Headteacher



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Governing Body

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2025