

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"*

Autumn 2020

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.

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 so 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.
- Infant and Junior Schools will ensure that their term dates and non-pupil days are the same.
- 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 and group outings/events (no offsite visits due to Covid 19)
- Work with parents and pupils to address reasons for non-authorized 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 Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Covid related absence

Different codes will be noted on the register:

For 2020-21 only, this includes circumstances relating to coronavirus ^{*2}, as well as the normal non-compulsory school age absence.

For 2020-21, this returns to its normal meaning of unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances, rather than its additional use for circumstances relating to coronavirus, as was the case in the later part of 2019-20.

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. Walsh (Juniors) or Mrs. Bell (Infants).

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 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 EWO (Educational Welfare Officer), Attendance and Behaviour Support 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 Pastoral Lead 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 practise. 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.

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 a Havering Education Welfare Officer as part of our safeguarding procedures.

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school each day of absence before 9:30am.
- **Due to COVID-19 you may call/email the school as there is no access to school reception unless invited.**

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Send you a letter if your child's attendance has dropped to 95%.
- Send you a second warning letter if your child's attendance continues to drop.
- Refer the matter to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) if attendance moves below 90%.

Upon your child's return the school may require a medical certificate as proof of illness if off longer than 5 days. An email or dated holiday ticket will need to be shown to confirm original return date.

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. So 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.

The Attendance, Behaviour and Traveller Support Officer

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 and Behaviour Support 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:

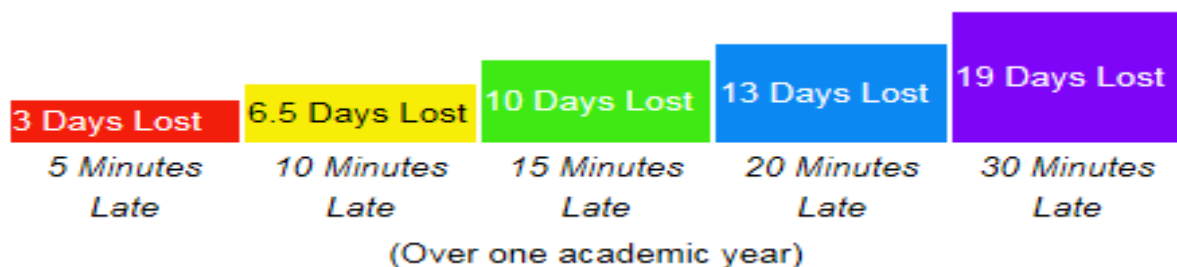
The school day starts at **8.55am**. We expect your child to be in the playground by **8.45am** ready to enter class. However, at this moment in time we have a staggered start and finish time due to Covid 19.

In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after the register closes at 9.05 they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but late. If a child has more than 6 lates 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 9am, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as 'L' (late before registers have closed). Arrivals after 9:15am 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. As a result the penalty amount would be £60 if paid within 21 days or doubled to £120 any later than 28 days.

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** form, 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 and Behaviour Support Service. A penalty notice will be issued in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

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

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 such this will be referred to the Attendance and Behavior Support Service.