

URSULINE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ursuline Catholic Primary School is committed to providing excellence for children of all abilities. High attendance and good punctuality is essential for students to work to their potential, be successful and benefit from the opportunities available to them at school. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly.

Achieving high attendance is a necessity in preparing pupils for future working life as an adult. Pupils should be at school **on time, every day** that the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that parents and carers recognise the responsibility and obligation to make sure that pupils attend regularly. This policy sets out how the school can work together with parents/carers and other agencies to achieve excellent attendance and punctuality.

1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR ATTENDANCE

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

Ensuring regular attendance at school is the **legal responsibility of parents. By law, all children of compulsory school age must attend school.** Poor attendance not only undermines a child's education and future life chances, it can also put children at risk and encourage anti-social behaviour. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

1.2 PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE

To help promote good attendance the school will

- Ensure staff set a good example
- Adopt a positive attitude to children who are regular and punctual attenders
- Monitor attendance by completion of registers
- Monitor absence and lateness through communication with parents
- Involve parents
- Involve the Attendance and Welfare Service when appropriate
- Reward good attendance

2.0 ABSENCE PROCEDURES

2.1 If a pupil is absent parents should:

- Contact the school by 9 am on the first day of absence: the dedicated telephone number is 924 1704.
- Send a note in on the first day that the pupil returns with an explanation of the absence- you must do this even if you have already telephoned us.
- Parents/Carers may also call into school and report to office staff
- For absences that extend to a week (5 school days) some form of medical evidence is required; this can be in the form of a Doctor's note/copy prescription/sight of prescribed medication.

2.2 If a pupil is absent the school will:

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if a message (that explains the absence) has not been received.
- Invite parents/carers in to school to discuss the situation if absences persist.

2.3 Telephone numbers:

- There are times when the school will need to contact parents on a range of issues, including absence, so it is essential that the school has up to date contact numbers at all times. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

3.0 LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a student 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 students also disrupt lessons.

3.1 How we manage lateness

- At 8.55 the school day starts and children are expected to be in school at that time, when the registers will be taken.
- Any child arriving after the register is taken will receive a late mark.
- The register closes at 9.30 am

In accordance with the Regulations, if pupils arrive after 9.30 am they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If a pupil has a persistent late record, parents/carers may be invited into school to resolve the problem. Parents/Carers can approach the school at any time if they experience problems getting their child to the school on time.

4.0 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**. Registers are taken twice a day by staff to record attendance marks for class. Registers are legal documents so the school staff are obliged to complete them accurately.

4.1 Authorised

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies and other unavoidable causes.

4.2 Unauthorised

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 unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark. Registers close at 9.30 am. A child arriving after that time will be recorded as U (unauthorised)
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Oversleeping
- Absent to look after an unwell sibling
- Inadequate uniform
- Confusion over term dates

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, parents/carers should not condone their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending as this gives the child the impression that attendance does not matter.

5.0 EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE IN TERM TIME

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off during school term time. Parents/Carers may request leave for exceptional circumstances and this will be considered by the Head Teacher on an individual basis. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school or in excess of that agreed will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

5.1 Holidays during term time

It is the school's policy not to grant holidays during term time, in line with the amendments made to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 which came into force on 1st September 2013.

5.2 Exceptional Leave

Children have a total of 13 weeks holiday a year so parents should only request that they be able to take their child out of school under **exceptional circumstances**. This is known as exceptional leave and a request must be made to the Head Teacher using the form available from the school office. In this request parents/carers should make clear the reasons why it is necessary to take their child/ children out of school. Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's education and is not acceptable. All requests for exceptional leave must be made at least 10 days in advance.

6.0 PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 15% or more across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects. The school expects parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. Parent/Carers will be informed of this concern immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully.

7.0 PENALTY NOTICE PROCEEDINGS

Penalty Notices for absence from school can be issued by the Attendance and Welfare Service based on requests from school.

The following circumstances are considered appropriate as reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Truancy, including attendance and exclusion sweeps
- Parentally- condoned absences
- Excessive holidays in term time
- Excessive delayed return from extended holidays
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed

A pupil has to be absent from school in one of these circumstances for at least a minimum evidential requirement of twelve (12) school sessions lost to unauthorised absence in the current term **and/or** twenty (20) sessions lost to unauthorised absence over two consecutive terms in order to trigger a Penalty Notice.

Payment of a penalty within 21 days of receipt of the notice is £60 per parent per child. Payment after this time, but within 28 days of receipt of the notice is £120 (**The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**).

Following a request by the school for the issuing of a Penalty Notice a check is made by the Attendance and Welfare Service to ensure that the request meets the terms of the Code of Conduct.

Non- payment of penalty

Non- payment of the penalty within the 28 day time limit will trigger the prosecution process under the provisions of section 444 of the 1996 Education Act or section 103 of the 2006 Education Act, except where the notice is withdrawn. However, as with all prosecutions the rules of evidence and criminal procedural rules apply and so the Local Authority must be satisfied that any prosecution meets the “evidential” test and the “public interest” test, otherwise a prosecution may not proceed.

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. 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 the case will be referred to the Local Authority who will invite the parent to a school attendance panel. It is here they will receive a formal warning in relation to their child’s attendance at school.

8.0 CHILDREN MISSING IN EDUCATION

No child will be removed from roll without consultation between the Head Teacher and the Attendance & Welfare Service. Where a child is missing from education with prolonged absences that are unexplained or if a family move away from the area but do not register with another school, the School will alert the Local Authority who will then take action according to child missing in education policy and procedures. Movement of children between local authorities and schools is tracked nationally.

9.0 PUBLICATON OF ATTENDANCE FIGURES

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. 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.

