

Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School



An Academy School Part of
The Good Shepherd Catholic Trust



Attendance Policy 2026

Our Mission Statement:

We are a Catholic school. We strive to be a sign of Christ's presence in the world. We follow Jesus.

Date Approved by Governing Body:	Summer 2026
Date To be Reviewed by:	Summer 2029
Signed By:	Nicholas Bernal- Safeguarding Governor

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Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School

Pupil Attendance Policy

Introduction

Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

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

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence, or late arrival, disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline our commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters.
- Report to parents/carers on their child's attendance at the end of each term.
- During the term, contact parents/carers as soon as their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by reporting class achievements.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), 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 a parent may be asked to provide medical evidence for their 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 that 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 which may include issuing each parent with a penalty in circumstances deemed appropriate, the matter may be referred to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine and/or up to 3 months in prison. If you are found guilty in court, you will receive a criminal conviction.

Unauthorised absence may include:

- 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 without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the Headteacher. This may result in school applying to the local authority to issue a Penalty Notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the local authority.
- Day trips.
- Other leave of absence in term time, which has not been agreed.

Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes however is recorded as an absence for the session.

School Attendance and the Law

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary 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 may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence **must be made in writing**. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a Penalty Notice may be requested by this school.

At Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the Headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are “rare, significant, unavoidable and short”. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- At any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- During assessment and test periods in the school's calendar affecting your child.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.

School Refusing:

Whilst any child may occasionally have time 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 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, Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer or a Child and Family Support Worker.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need a parent/carer's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA (Persistent Absent) mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark, we will inform the

parent/carer. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All parents of PA children are expected to work with us to ensure that their child's attendance improves. When deemed necessary by school, medical evidence may be requested where absences are not accurately explained or there is a pattern of absence.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before *8.30am*. The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or call into school personally and speak to the office staff. You may prefer to report your child's absence using ParentMail.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before *8.30am*.
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence if requested to support the absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence, if we have not heard from you, however it is your responsibility to contact us in the first instance.
- We will continue to attempt to contact you until we are able to ascertain why your child is absent. This is to safeguard you and your child. In exceptional circumstances where school cannot contact you the School, Police and / or Educational Welfare Officer may attempt a home visit to ensure that you and your child are safe.
- Contact you if your child's attendance is below 96%.
- Depending on the circumstances, you may be invited to meet with the Educational Welfare Officer to discuss how you can work with school to improve your child's attendance.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

Attendance Compliance 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 Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice, prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of an Education Supervision Order, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and feedback/conferencing on their previous day's work. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons; this can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.35am** when children can begin to come into school. The gates close at **8.45am**; your child will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in by that time. Children arriving after

8.45am are required to come in to school via the school office if accompanied by a parent or carer, the parent/carers will sign them in and provide a reason for their late arrival.

In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives late they may receive a mark that shows them to be on site 'U', but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of being issued with a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with Educational Welfare Officer but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will provide work for children to do during their absence.

Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School, *other than at the end of Year 6* parents/carers are required to email/ write to school informing us of their new address, their child's new school name and address and the date they will start their new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our pupils.

In the event of an unauthorised extended term of absence you may forfeit your school place at Our Lady of Lourdes. Although the likelihood of this happening is rare any decision made would be after liaising with the Educational Welfare Officer.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, local authorities are required to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to the parent/carers of a child who has irregular school attendance and where the absence is unauthorised by the school. The penalty notice imposes a fine, which is reduced if paid within 28 days. If the fine is not paid within 28 days or from the first date when the notice is issued, the parent/carers will be prosecuted in a Magistrates Court for the offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1966. This is clearly a last resort and we hope that families will work with us to ensure that this is not something that has to happen to enable us to provide the rich education and opportunities that your child deserves.

Summary

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for key family members in case of emergency.

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 school, on time, every day.

All school staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Appendix 1

DfE “The link between absence and attainment at KS2 – 2018/19 academic year”

The analysis of the link between overall absence and attainment when taking prior attainment and pupil characteristics into account showed that, for each KS2 and KS4 measure, overall absence had a statistically significant negative link to attainment – i.e. every extra day missed was associated with a lower attainment outcome.

In 2022/2023:

Figure 1 Proportion of pupils in each 5% attendance band for Year 6 achieving expected standard in RWM at the end of KS2

