



# Our Lady Catholic Primary School

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*Headteacher: Mr. R. Curry*

13<sup>th</sup> January, 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

As you all may be aware, reducing absence is a key priority – both nationally and locally. This is in line with government initiatives such as the Healthy Schools Programme and Improving Attendance and Reducing Persistent Absence. It has been proved that children who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve at school and reach their full potential. Missing school disrupts school routines and learning. The most common reason given for children to miss school is illness, however, most of the time childhood ailments can be managed in school. Over the course of the past year, we have found a steady increase in the number of children missing school due to assumed illness and end of term unauthorised holidays - which is something that must be addressed and reversed – immediately. We need the support of the entire school community to help us tackle this issue and we are relying on you.

## **What is considered as poor attendance?**

Anything below 94% is weak, less than 90% is poor and, if attendance dips below 85%, we will have serious concerns. In this school, we are aiming for every pupil to achieve attendance levels of at least 96%. We monitor attendance and provide termly reports on each pupil's attendance. At the end of each half term, we will now be identifying all those pupils whose attendance has fallen below 90% and issuing a letter to inform parents. We will then monitor the pupils' attendance on a weekly basis and hope to see a pattern of unbroken weeks developing.

I am asking for your support in improving whole school attendance and punctuality. During the COVID pandemic it was necessary for pupils and families to isolate if they or a close contact tested positive. That is not now the case and it is essential that we build back up on our previous positive attendance rates. The impact upon children's education through lost learning is huge. At a time when so much education has been disrupted it is vital that we make every school minute count. I urge you to ensure that your child is in school and on time every day to prevent anyone falling behind with their learning.

*Persistent cases where poor attendance and punctuality do not improve can be considered to be neglect.*

Government departments track school attendance figures. It is considered that attendance of 90% or below is **persistent absence** which will be closely monitored by school staff. Failing to improve on this 90% can lead to prosecution, which school want to help families avoid. There are things you can do to improve your child's attendance and avoid falling into the persistent absence category:

- If your child is unwell and you are unsure whether to send them to school, contact the office to seek advice on 01707324408.
- **Do not take any holidays during term times.**
- Keep up to date with what % attendance your child has so that you know if they are at risk of persistent absence (office staff will provide this for you).
- Speak to school staff with any concerns.
- Talk to your child about the importance of them being in school and let them know how important **you** feel it is.

The table below provides an example of the impact of lost learning through pupil absence:

Attendance % over a school year	Equal to number of days absent	Converted to approximate weeks of absence	Approximate number of lessons missed	School Concern Level
95%	9.5	2	47.5	Pupil can catch up and still succeed
90%	19	4	95	Poor attendance - we are concerned
80%	38	8	190	Very poor attendance – we are very concerned
70%	57	12	285	Serious concerns

So a child who has an 80% absence rate has missed **38 days** of school and has missed **190 lessons**.

Punctuality is also highly important. Pupils who arrive late to school are not only losing learning but also disrupting the learning of others as they arrive late for lessons. Pupils do not like being late into school and we witness how upsetting it can be for them. We want to prevent this.

The table below provides an example of the impact of lost learning through pupil lateness.

Number of minutes late <i>per day</i> over a school year	Approximate equivalent number of days lost learning
5	3
10	6.5
15	10
20	13

#### **Lateness:**

Please try to ensure that your child arrives at school so that they are present for registration; this is done at **8.50am** each day. Meeting and exchanging news with friends before school is important for the children's social development. Lateness can cause problems over lunch money/numbers, register marking and missed instructions. Where a genuine reason for lateness exists, this will be an authorised absence - but where explanations are inadequate or the lateness is after 9.10am, then an absence (late) will be recorded.

#### **Illness and First Day Call:**

If your child is unable to attend school through illness, you should inform us by telephone on the first day of absence **before 9.00am**. It is useful to know the expected day of return. If you do not supply us with this information, we have a duty to contact you so that we may be sure of the child's whereabouts as this is a safeguarding measure.

**Sickness and Diarrhoea:**

Children suffering from sickness or diarrhoea should not return to school until **48 hours** after they have eaten and shown no further sign of illness. We appreciate parents/carers support with this matter.

**Medical Appointments (including Dentist):**

Medical appointments should not be made in school time unless it is unavoidable. If they are unavoidable and are local, we will expect children in school for registration if the appointment is after 10am. Parents will need to come back to school to collect their child. Evidence of appointments will be requested by office staff. Failure to supply evidence will result in an unauthorised attendance mark. A full day off for a medical appointment is unacceptable, unless the treatment your child has received has made it difficult for your child to return to school.

**Holiday:**

Absence is **not authorised** for family holiday unless the circumstances are exceptional. A special leave form must be completed prior to any requested holidays. This can be obtained from the school office.

We want to help families get their child to school on time. Here are some things you can try:

- Have everything you/your child needs for school prepared the night before.
- Ensure that your child goes to bed reasonably so they are not too tired to get up in the morning.
- Ensure your child has a good night's sleep by minimising their use of devices at bed time.
- Have a consistent bedtime routine for your child.
- Set an alarm to allow plenty of time for your morning routine in getting to school on time.
- Bring your child to breakfast club (7.45am – 8.45am)

We hope that these notes will help you to have a clearer understanding about the school's expectations with regards to attendance and punctuality. We would be very pleased to answer any questions you may have about our approach to maintaining and improving our attendance record.

As ever, we thank you for your support. I hope we can make improvements to attendance and punctuality over the course of this term.

Kind regards,

Richard Curry  
(Headteacher)

Mrs K Donkor  
(Chair of Governors)