



Our Lady Catholic Primary School

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Dear Parents/Carers,

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. Below 85% is regarded as persistent absence by the DFE. 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 identify all those pupils whose attendance has fallen below 90% and issue a letter or make a telephone call informing parents. We then monitor the pupils' attendance on a weekly basis and hope to see a pattern of unbroken weeks developing.

Lateness:

Please try to ensure that your child arrives at school so that they are present for registration; this is done at 9.00am 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. Alternatively, you can email us at admin@ourladys527.herts.sch.uk or visit the school in person. 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.

If a child is absent through illness or medical appointments it will normally be counted as authorised. We request medical evidence for illness absence if your child has more than three separate bouts of illness. Evidence may be a bottle of prescribed medicine, a doctor's appointment card, a photocopy of a log of any telephone consultations or a specific letter from a doctor. Failure to supply evidence, if it has been requested, will result in an unauthorised attendance mark. Where we have concerns over excessive absence patterns through illness, we

will need to discuss this with parents in order to gain a better understanding of the problems and to offer support – for example by involving the School Health Service.

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.

Clarification on Penalty Notices:

We have a duty of care, shared with the Hertfordshire County Council, to challenge poor attendance. Where attendance levels are low and where there are invalid reasons (judged by the Education Welfare Service, not the parent) for a pupil's frequent absence or where parents condone absence (e.g. by taking children out of school on unauthorised holidays) then parents render themselves liable to a fine of **£60 per pupil, per parent**. Penalty notices are issued if your child has ten sessions (five days) of unauthorised absence. So, for example, this could mean a fine of £360 for two parents of three children. This would be doubled to £720 if the fine is not paid within 21 days and could ultimately lead to a criminal conviction. Of course, no one wants this to happen. However, due to last year's decline in our attendance figures, we need to be extremely clear about this issue.

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 always, we appreciate your support in this matter in our continuing drive to make Our Lady Catholic Primary School the very best it can be!

Kind regards,

Richard Curry
(Headteacher)

Mr P McKenna
(Chair of Governors)