

Attendance Policy



Our Lady and St. Oswald's Catholic Primary School

APPROVED BY GOVERNORS: Nov 2024

RESPONSIBLE PERSON: Headteacher

At Our Lady and St. Oswald's Respect is one of our core value. Mutual respect and good behaviour is the expectation of all adults and children at all times.

Mission Statement

We seek to ensure that all pupils receive a full-time education, maximising the opportunities for all to realise their true potential. All school staff will work, with pupils and their families, to support them in meeting their legal duty to ensure that their children achieve maximum possible attendance; and that any problems which may impede full attendance are acted upon quickly.

Key Points

- Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and fulltime basis.
- Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of all absences is requested from parents.
- Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (i.e. illness or other legitimate reason).
- Where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation, an explanation is required. If one is not provided, the absence will be treated as unauthorised and the register annotated accordingly. Reasons given such as: minding the house, looking after other children, or shopping trips within school hours are not acceptable reasons for absence from school.
- In promoting regular attendance, the school will work closely with Education Welfare Officers, who regularly monitor the school's attendance registers, examining levels of absence and patterns of lateness or non-attendance among specific pupils.

Regular school attendance is important if children are to achieve their best in school. Children need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in law. To this end we will actively pursue the goal of regular attendance and individual absences will be carefully investigated and monitored.

Registration

An attendance register will be kept at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session and children are marked present or absent. Absences will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised. Different categories of absence are marked in accordance with Local Authority arrangements.

Registers should be marked in such a way that original entries and corrections are both clearly distinguishable.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

Illness and other legitimate reasons for absence from school

If a child is unfit for school, parents are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence before morning registration (8.50 am). Other reasons for absence must be discussed prior to the absence with the Headteacher. Any authorisation for absence will be

decided upon on a case-by-case basis. However, the school cannot authorise absence for shopping, looking after sick parents or siblings, day trips, birthday outings etc. However, leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. family bereavement) or for medical/dental appointments that have to take place during school time.

Absence without explanation

If a child is absent at morning registration, and the school has not received an explanation, the School Administrator will contact the parent by telephone to establish a reason for absence from school.

Leave of Absence during Term Time

Head teachers are only permitted to authorise any leave of absence when an application has been made in advance and it is felt to be for an **'exceptional circumstance'**.

'Exceptional circumstance' is likely to be:

- where the event is highly unlikely to occur again in a child's school life;
- it is necessary for the child to be in attendance at the event;
- the event cannot be organised outside of the school term;
- the event is necessary to the health and well-being of the child;

Anyone wishing to request a leave of absence for an 'exceptional circumstance' is asked to complete a request form (from school reception).

Requests for a leave of absence for the purposes of a family holiday will not be authorised. Unauthorised absence may then be reported to the Local Authority. The triggers for reporting to the Local Authority include: child's current attendance %, absence that will impact upon national assessment periods and duration of absence.

Lateness

Pupils must attend on time to be given a mark for that session, unless lateness is unavoidable (e.g. transport difficulties or a medical appointment). Parents are expected to ensure that children arrive on time for morning registration at 8.45am. Children who arrive **before** registration has closed at 9.00am and will be marked as 'L' (late before registers close). Children who arrive **after** registration has closed at 9.00am and will be marked as 'U' (late after registers close), thus affecting overall pupil attendance.

Attendance Monitoring

The school administrator is responsible for entering all attendance data into the school's electronic attendance record. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) monitors all children's attendance once a month with the School Administrator and Headteacher, to identify any particular cause for concern. Where a child's attendance drops below 90%, or if a child is persistently late, the EWO will contact the parents discuss the issue. If poor attendance continues over an extended period of time, the Local Authority may prosecute or issue a fixed penalty fine.

Parental Notes

Only the school in law can condone absence, not the parent. A telephone call or note does not oblige the school to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason. If there is doubt, the absence must be treated as 'unauthorised'.

Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments

Where there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, the school and Education Welfare Officer can refer to a doctor in the School Health Service or the child's G.P.

Leave for appointments may be authorised where confirmation has been received by the parent (either in person, in writing, by a telephone call or on production of an appointment card). When a pupil is present for registration and then attends the appointment, the fact that the child is not physically present **MUST** be recorded for purposes of emergency evacuation. Similarly, the presence of a pupil who was not there for registration but returns later from an appointment should be recorded. There is an Attendance log kept for this purpose by the registers in the School Office.

Special Occasions

Only truly, exceptional cases should be authorised, e.g. a birthday would be unauthorised but a graduation, authorised. Consideration should be given to the nature of the event; its frequency; whether advance notification was given; the child's overall attendance pattern.

Family Bereavement

Sensitivity is required and absences may be authorised for funerals and associated events.

Days of Religious Observance

Notice of these should be given to the school and absences classified as authorised.

Traveller Children

Where the child has attained the age of six years, a minimum of 200 attendances (half day sessions) must be made in a twelve-month period, schools may authorise absence. Liaison with the Traveller Education Service will be necessary.

Where Traveller Children are registered at school and are not attending, their absence should be investigated in the same way as for any other child.

Off-Site Activities

These may be

- (i) school-directed (e.g. educational visits)
- (ii) personal or activities (e.g. music examinations)

In (i) children are marked present or absent as usual.

In (ii) authorisation of absence is discretionary but will normally be granted if the time needed is deemed reasonable.

Excluded Pupils

- Temporary exclusion is an authorised absence.
- Permanent exclusion should be treated as authorised while a review or an appeal is in progress but if permanent exclusion is confirmed s/he should be removed from the school roll. During the period of authorised absence, the school should set up work for the child.

Pupil Referral Units (PRU)

Pupils with dual registration at both school and a PRU will have their absence authorised whilst attending school at the Pupil Referral unit.

Reviewed: November 2024

Next Review: November 2025