

Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Primary School

School attendance: what parents need to know



Why is good attendance important?

Good attendance and punctuality are vital for success at school, and to establish positive life habits that are necessary for future success.

Through regular attendance, pupils can:

- Build friendships and develop social groups.
- Develop life skills.
- Engage in essential learning and other school social events.
- Achieve to their full potential.
- Minimise the risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour and becoming victims or perpetrators of crime.



All parents should promote good attendance and work in partnership with school to provide a cohesive approach.

The Principal will decide the amount of time a pupil can be away from school, taking into account their attendance record.

Requests **will not** be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before or during assessment periods
- Holiday requests during term time. This includes Mondays and Fridays for long weekends.
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above **10%** for any reason



Lateness and truancy

Good attendance doesn't just involve being present in school – it also involves punctuality. You also have a responsibility to ensure that your child arrives to school on time, and stays in school during the day.

All pupils are expected to be in their classrooms at **8.55 am** every day. If pupils are not in their classrooms by **9.05 am** they receive a late mark – this is an **unauthorised absence**.

If the school believes a pupil is truancying, immediate action will be taken – this can escalate to penalty notices.

How can I help?

You can help in many ways:

- Encourage good attendance by making sure your child goes to school regularly.
- Take an interest in your child's school work.

- Make sure your child understands that **you** do not approve of absence from school.
- Support our school in our efforts to control inappropriate behaviour.
- Inform us on the first day of your child's absence, and keep us updated throughout the absence period.
- Co-operate with our school to make sure your child overcomes any attendance problems.
- Discuss any planned absences with the Principal and apply for permission well in advance.
- Only take your child out of school during term time where the absence has been **authorised**.

Attendance matters!

Don't underestimate the importance of 100 percent attendance. Even one day missed has an effect on learning:

- **98** percent attendance means **four** school days missed
- **95** percent attendance means **10** school days missed
- **90** percent attendance means **19** school days missed (this is almost a month)
- **80** percent attendance means **38** school days missed (this is more than a half term)
- **Five minutes** late each day means **three** school days missed

Please help us promote good attendance throughout our school – you really do play an important role.

If you'd like further information regarding attendance at our school, please see our **Attendance and Punctuality Policy** – downloadable from the school's website.

What does the law say?

All children of compulsory school age – between 5-16 – must receive a suitable full-time education. As a parent, you are responsible for ensuring that this happens, either by registering your child at a school or by making appropriate alternative arrangements.

Once you have registered your child at a school, you are also legally responsible for ensuring that your child attends school regularly and punctually. If you fail to do this – even if your child misses school without you knowing – legal action can be taken against you by the LA. It is a legal offence to fail to ensure your child attends school regularly.



Legal action can involve a penalty notice or being taken to court.

Parents also face the risk of imprisonment and parenting orders. Parenting orders involve attending a counselling and guidance programme, usually a parenting class.

A penalty notice of £60 may be issued as an alternative to prosecution, but this will rise to £120 if it is not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay a penalty notice will usually lead to **prosecution**.



Can my child ever be absent?

When a pupil is absent from school, this will be classified as either **'authorised'** or **'unauthorised'**.

The Academy Committee and Principal decide which absences are granted as authorised. Authorised absences are only permitted for valid reasons, e.g.:

- Illness
- Urgent medical or dental appointments
- Religious observances
- Close family bereavement

Wherever possible, parents should always try to arrange medical and dental appointments during school holidays or after school hours.



What are unauthorised absences?

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider essential or reasonable.

Unauthorised absences can include:

- Forgetting school term dates
- Oversleeping
- Absences which have not been explained
- Arriving at school after the register has closed
- Leaving school for no valid reason during the day
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Keeping pupils off school unnecessarily or without explanation
- Day trips or family outings
- Problems with uniform/clothing
- Birthdays
- Holidays

Holidays during term time

The school **cannot** be expected to authorise an absence for a holiday during term time.

Taking holidays during term time means that pupils miss important school time – both educationally and for other school activities. It will be difficult for pupils to catch up on work when they return to school. Only in **exceptional circumstances** may a holiday be authorised during term time – this will be decided by the Principal.

Exceptional circumstances do not involve cheaper costs, family availability or weather conditions.

You can be fined if you take your child on holiday during term time without permission from the Principal.



Requesting absences

Authorisation of absences are at the discretion of the Principal.

All absences, including for holidays, must be requested as far in advance as possible. If you think your child needs to be taken out of school, you should discuss the reasons with the Principal as soon as possible.

If the Principal is satisfied with the evidence and the notice period, they will authorise the absence.