

Great Crosby Catholic Primary School
'...that they may have life and have it to the full.'

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Date of issue:	November 2019
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This Attendance & Punctuality Policy is part of a broader suite of Safeguarding Policies including the schools Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law.

Great Crosby Catholic Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. The school considers regular attendance to be 97%

Our Policy applies to all children registered at this school and this Policy is made available on our school website to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school.

This Policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from Sefton Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head teacher and Governors at our school are committed to working closely with parents, other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

***Definition of parent: Section 576 of the Education Act 1996-** A parent in relation to any child or young person, includes any person:-

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for him/her; or
- who has care of him/her.

This also includes all parents who are absent. Parental partners can be included whether or not they are married or the natural parent of the child as they have 'care' of the child. If a pupil lives with a grandparent or older sibling as their main carer, they can also be included as they are the main care provider.

It is also important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student, that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

2. PRINCIPLES OF THE GREAT PRIMARY ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Governing Body of Great Crosby place a high priority on achieving standards and feel that excellent pupil attendance and punctuality are essential. They undertake this role by

- Monitoring whole school attendance termly and take appropriate action should it affect standards.
- Nominate a named Governor for Attendance.

In order for children to achieve their potential, pupils must be highly motivated to learn and keen and eager to attend school. Regular, punctual attendance will establish good habits that will support them throughout their lives. To achieve this, the Governors and

staff are committed to working in partnership with parents to ensure that the school achieves a MINIMUM of 97% attendance throughout the school.

The Government expects us to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence (less than 90%);
- Ensure every pupil has access to a suitable education, to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Attendance during one school year	equals this number of days absent	which is approximately this many weeks absent	which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

To maintain a focus on this the school will:

- Ensure staff set good personal examples
- Adopt a positive attitude to children who are regular and punctual attenders
- Monitor attendance by completion of registers
- Follow up absences with requests for letters or verbal explanation from parents
- Follow up unexplained lateness
- Involve parents
- Implement escalation procedures (see Appendix 1)
- Involve the Education Welfare Officer when appropriate

3. NATIONAL CONTEXT

The 1996 Education Act (section 444) states that parents (including non-related adult carers in the child’s household) have a **legal responsibility** to ensure that those of compulsory school age are educated, either by **‘regular’** attendance at school or **‘otherwise’**. The 2008 Education and Skills Act (section 155) specifies the same requirement regarding regular attendance at alternative provision.

The duty on parents is to ensure that their children are educated, either at school or ‘otherwise’. Education is therefore compulsory. In terms of ‘otherwise’, children may be educated by their parents at home, by a private tutor or in establishments other than schools, ie – FE colleges from the age of 14, special units, hospitals or in alternative educational programmes or work experience. The law allows parents to choose the alternative options, provided they can demonstrate to the Local Authority that the

education is full-time and 'suitable' to the child's education needs, up until the relevant leaving-date for all young people.

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register and attendance register from the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

For most students the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the school year. Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

4. DAILY PROCEDURES

Under the 2006 Education Regulations the school is **legally** required to register students twice daily. Registers are marked in the morning at 9.05 am and in the afternoon after lunch.

It is essential that all students are registered on both occasions.

School opens from 8.40 am when all pupils/students should be in their classroom in preparation for the register being taken. At this time they should collect items for the day, complete their daily challenge and make sure that they are aware of any changes / arrangements to the day's activities. **It is a legal requirement that a register is taken at the start of the day.** Not only does the process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a student checklist in respect of health and safety issues – e.g. Fire Drill

Each year a school calendar is sent out and is also on the website which clearly indicates the days when your child is expected to be in school. A copy of this is available from the school office at any time

5. ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Regular attendance at school is the responsibility of parents and carers. Under the 1996 Education Act parents commit an **offence** if the child does not attend school regularly. ***If your child cannot come to school because of illness you should advise the school on the first day of absence by telephone.*** If no message is received we will make every effort to contact you. The school requires **two** emergency contact numbers. It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. Please inform the school office of any changes.

Parents are encouraged to ensure that their child brings in a letter confirming the reasons for the absence when the child returns to school.

If a student is absent parents should:

- Contact the school by 8.40 ideally on the first day of absence; the dedicated telephone number is 0151 924 8661 or a text can be sent any time to 07860 003244
- If convenient send a note in on the first day that the student returns with an explanation of absence or Parents/Carers may also call into the school office and report to reception staff.
- For absences that extend to a week (5 school days) some form of medical evidence is required; This can be in the form of a Doctor's note, copy of prescription, sight of prescribed medicine.

If a student is absent the school will:

- Telephone or text parent/carers on the first day of absence if a message (that explains the absence) has not been received.
- Telephone each subsequent day for an update on the child's condition.
- Invite parent/carers in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer Carolyn Solkin and/or Headteacher if absences persist.

Once contact (verbal and/or written) has been made with the parent the school will determine if the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised.

The school will only **authorise** a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. The school has the right to request medical evidence if a parent rings the school to confirm the student is unwell. This may include: a medical appointment card with one appointment entered, slip with date, pupils name and surgery stamp, signed by GP Receptionist, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence. The Head Teacher may not be able to authorise medical absence without this evidence.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance so a decision can be made whether to authorise the absence or not.

The school **may** authorise absence under certain specific circumstances. However, the parent must contact the Headteacher in advance to secure authorisation. This **may** include work related interviews and meetings with external agencies. The Headteacher **may** also authorise events where students are involved in any supervised sporting events or trials, theatre performances and participation in acts of religious worship. Absence request forms are available from the school office and should be completed with all relevant information regarding the absence request.

Parents/carers are encouraged to read the Public Health England publication 'Guidance on Infection Control in Schools and other childcare settings' (September 2014) as it provides useful guidance on whether an illness necessitates students taking time off school.

6. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. These are an **offence** by the parent. Such circumstances may include:

- A student not attending school to go shopping.
- A student not attending school as it is her birthday or the birthday of a family member.
- A student not attending school as the family have gone to the airport to meet a visiting relative.

- A student not attending school due to attending a hospital appointment for another family member.
- A student not attending school due to the fact the family returned late in the previous evening from a family holiday.
- A student not attending school as they are looking after younger siblings.
- A student attends a medical appointment in the morning but then fails to return to school for afternoon lessons.

Our school may request penalty notices to address unauthorised absence. A minimum evidential requirement of ten (10) school sessions lost to unauthorised absence by any pupil in the current term **and/or** eighteen (18) sessions lost to unauthorised absence over two consecutive terms will be required to trigger the process.

The Local Authority will:

- Issue a formal written warning to the parent/carer of the possibility of a penalty notice being issued.
- In the same letter, set a period of 15 school days within which the pupil must have no unauthorised absence.
- Issue a penalty notice through the post at the end of the 15 day period if the required level of improvement has not been achieved.

7. ABSENCE CODES

According to the DfE guidance the following codes are used for authorised absence on the register.

Code I: ILLNESS

Schools can request medical evidence from parents / carers if they feel the authenticity of an illness is in doubt.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Parents / Carers are encouraged to arrange appointments out of school hours but the school will authorise if confirmation of the appointment is provided.

Code C: Other circumstances

This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, ie – family funeral.

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Code D: Dual Registered

This code will be used if a student is registered at two schools.

Code J: Interview

This code will be used when it has been agreed that the student can miss school to attend an interview or entrance exam.

Code P: Approved sporting activity

This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, ie – training sessions, trials and sporting events.

Code R: Religious Observation

This code is used to cover major religious festivals during term-time. The school will only authorise one day absence for religious events.

Code V: Educational visits and trips**Code W: Work Experience**

According to the DFE guidance the following codes are to be used for **unauthorised** absences on the register:

Code G: Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence and the parents still take the child on holiday, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for the leave of absence in advance the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence.

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is **not satisfied** with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived late to school after 9.15am

If a student arrives after 9.15am without any written or verbal confirmation from parents/carers to explain their lateness, the school will mark the pupil with the U code. This means that, although the student is in school, she is marked absent for the entire morning. This will be marked as an authorised absence and could result in prosecution for parents/carers if the pupil is persistently late.

8. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, SAFEGUARDING AND CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff will follow the school's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future (Keeping Children Safe in Education (updated September 2018) and Children Missing in Education Nov 2013, updated Sept 2016).

Notifying the Local Authority

Our school notify the Local Authority of any pupil/student who fails to attend school regularly after making reasonable enquiries, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 regulation 12.

The school (regardless of designation) must also notify the Local Authority of any pupil/student who is to be deleted from the admission register.

Our school will demonstrate that we have taken reasonable enquiries to ascertain the whereabouts of children that would be considered 'missing'.

Where a child leaves our school without a destination or another school is not identified our school follow Sefton Council Children Missing Education Procedures and they can be found at [https://www.sefton.gov.uk/schools-learning/attendance-and-welfare/children-missing-education-\(cme\).aspx](https://www.sefton.gov.uk/schools-learning/attendance-and-welfare/children-missing-education-(cme).aspx). The school will liaise with Carole Blundell the Children Missing Education Co-ordinator who can be contacted on 0151 935 3181 or CME@sefton.gov.uk carole.blundell@sefton.gov.uk

9. RELUCTANCE TO GO TO SCHOOL

Sometimes students seem anxious about leaving home to go to school. They may tell you that they feel unwell or give another reason to not attend. You may notice that they are worried from things that they say e.g. that they do not want to do particular subjects, feel that they have no friends or are being bullied. If this is the case please contact the school as soon as possible to speak to the Headteacher, Assistant Head or Parent Support Adviser.

10. LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Under the DFE 'Advice on School Attendance' parents* can **no longer** expect schools to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday for up to 10 school days per year. The Headteacher may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances**'.

The Headteacher will also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. **From this perspective leave of absence in term time is no longer a parental right and will only be authorised at the Headteacher's discretion.** Under DFE guidelines the school will notify the Local Authority if a parent/s takes leave of absence **without** the Headteacher's permission. In these cases, the **G code** will be used on the register to show this absence is **unauthorised**.

Under these circumstances, the school will apply to the **Local Authority** for a **Penalty Charge Notice Fine (£60-£120)** to be issued by the Local Authority. The £60 Penalty Charge Notice will need to be paid in full separately by both parents within 21 days and

will rise to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the Penalty Charge Notice is not paid within 28 days, parents can be prosecuted under section 444, the Education Act 1996.

Children attending Sefton schools, including are not allowed days absence for holidays. Any absence, other than for illness or emergency medical attention, will be coded as Unauthorised, (G) – Family holiday not agreed or (O) Unauthorised absence. Parents may choose to complete an ‘Exceptional Circumstances Form’ stating why they are removing their child during term time. This is given to the Headteacher. Only exceptional circumstances will be authorised.

If an ‘exceptional circumstance form’ is rejected, then the absence; should the parent still proceed with the removal of their child during term time; is dealt with under the **Sefton Council Code of Conduct Penalty Notice.**

It is important for parents / carers to note that the school will not authorise ANY leave of absence unless the school feels the circumstances are unavoidable.

The school reserves the right to either contact the parents / carers directly or make an immediate referral to social care or the police if the school feels a student is potentially at risk while being taken out of school during term time.

The school will seek advice from the Local Authority if a student fails to return from an extended family holiday during term time and the school have made reasonable enquiries but cannot locate the student of their family. **This applies to leaves of absence that are both authorised and unauthorised by the school.** As a result the school may remove the student from roll under such circumstances. However, we will have a conversation with the Local Authority for advice on these matters.

11. PERSISTENT ABSENCE

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of students whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. **Students with attendance below 90% fall into the ‘Persistent Absentee’ category.**

According to the DFE guidance ‘If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the Local Authority’. In addition ‘Local Authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child’s regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

When a student’s attendance falls below 90% (at any stage of the year) we will track their attendance on a weekly basis. Mrs Solkin will contact parents to discuss the attendance concerns and formalise a plan to secure an improvement in attendance. The school may also consider implementing a **Parenting Contract** if the student continues to be absent from school without authorisation (This could involve meeting with our Attendance Governor.)

The contract will contain improvement targets with set timescales and an overview of the support provided by the school to support the child and her family. Parental failure to

comply with the contract may be used as evidence if the Local Authority decides to prosecute parents.

At our school we work in partnership with the Local Authority, to raise attendance across the school. If a child's attendance has not improved, a referral may be made to the Local Authority School Attendance Panel.

What is the purpose of the School Attendance Panel Meeting?

The purpose of the School Attendance Panel meeting is for you and your child to meet with Representatives from the Local Authority to identify the reasons for absence and to work together to improve attendance.

What will happen at the School Attendance Panel Meeting?

The reasons for absence will be identified and different strategies to improve attendance will be considered

- A supportive action plan will be agreed.
- An attendance target date for improvement will be set.
- The student's attendance will then be closely monitored for a period of 12 school weeks.

If the parent fails to attend without reasonable justification this could result in a Penalty Charge Notice being issued to parents/carers or court proceedings under the 'Single Justice' process. Under section 444, a **Penalty Charge Notice will be issued for £60 to parents**. This will be issued to both parents even if one of the parents does not live with the student. Each parent will have 21 days to make payment. This will rise to £120 if the initial fine is paid between 22 and 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. **There is no right of appeal by parents against the penalty charge notice**. Failure to pay the Penalty Charge Notice Fine will result in further legal action being taken by the courts, with the maximum fine currently £2,500 or three months in prison.

What happens next?

Whilst the intention of the School Attendance Panel meeting is that attendance will improve, if the attendance deteriorates by the target review date the Local Authority may recommend legal action is taken. This could include prosecution in the Magistrates' Court, Education Supervision Orders or Parenting Orders.

Issuing Penalty Charge Notices: Each parent receives a penalty charge notice for each child who has unauthorised absence. The penalty is £60 or £120 depending on how soon payment is made. So, if there are two parents and two children the total penalties could be up to £480. Failure to pay the penalty notices in Sefton may result in prosecution.

Taking parents to court for unauthorised absence: Education Act 1996 Section 444(1) - court can fine each parent up to £1000 per child, order payment of prosecution costs and/or impose a Parenting Order.

Taking parents to court for persistent unauthorised absence: Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A) - court can fine each parent up to £2,500 per child, order payment of the prosecution costs, impose a Parenting Order and/or sentence you to a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Under the 1989 Children Act the Local Authority has the power to issue an **Education Supervision Order (ESO)** and place a child under their supervision on the grounds that the child is not being 'properly educated' and is in danger of 'significant harm'. The Local Authority can issue an order if the child is persistently absent from school. The Local Authority appointed 'Supervisor' can give 'directions' to the parents on how the child should be educated and work with the parent to ensure the child attends school regularly.

Under the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act, if a student continues to have attendance issues after a parent has been convicted, the courts can also issue a **Parenting Order**. This legally requires the parents to participate in a programme of parenting support and counselling. If the unauthorised absence continues, a new case will be brought against the parent/s but previous parental failure to engage with the school and Local Authority can be cited.

12. PUNCTUALITY

As you may be aware, the law treats some persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents may be prosecuted by the Local Authority if late arrival is not resolved.

Poor punctuality can lead to your child:

- Feeling embarrassed in front of their friends.
- Missing the beginning of vital lessons.
- Missing important instructions for the rest of the school day.
- Learning bad habits which could affect their employability in the future.

Minutes late per day during the school year	Equal days' worth of teaching lost in a year
5 minutes	3.4 days
10 minutes	6.9 days
15 minutes	10.3 days
20 minutes	13.8 days
30 minutes	20.7 days

Late Procedures

Children, who arrive late and have gone to the office entrance, must be signed in by their parent/carer or appropriate adult, a reason for the lateness is also requested. The admin staff will:

- update the system with their mark. Adults of EYFS children will wait with their child until it is convenient for the child to be taken to class.

- Children who frequently arrive late will be monitored; parents will be contacted and a referral to Mrs Solkin will be considered and support offered where applicable.
- Children who arrive late after the registers have closed due to a medical appointment will be marked M. Each circumstance is looked at separately and may be recorded as 'L' if the child returns to school before the end of the session.

Any child arriving after 9:15am for any reason other than medical will be marked **U** (late after registers closed).

Children who have to leave for any reason throughout the day should be signed out at the main office by their parent/carer or appropriate adult. This is strongly discouraged. Parents are requested to make dental or medical appointments outside of school hours.

13. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE – WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

- Provide **two** emergency contacts to the school.
- Notify the school on the first day of absence.
- Try to make all medical appointments (doctors, dentist and hospital) out of school time. Obviously this is not always possible but in such cases, try to minimise the disruption to the day by getting an early morning appointment so that your child can attend afterwards OR a late afternoon appointment so that she can complete most of her timetable before leaving.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for being on time for school ensuring they have a realistic bedtime and will not be too tired to get up in the morning for school. Equipment should be prepared the night before. Regularly checking your child's planner can help you to do this.
- Discourage your child from staying overnight with friends during the week. This sometimes leads to them both being late (or not attending at all) the next day.
- Leave of absence during term time is not a parental right. If there are special or exceptional circumstances please contact the Headteacher and decision will be made if the absence can be authorised or not.
- Talk positively about going to school
- Monitor your child's internet and social media use to ensure they are not experiencing any difficulties that may prevent them from wanting to attend school.
- Take any worries seriously but do not show that you are unduly concerned. Believe that they will be sorted out. Contact school before the concerns escalate.

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE – WHAT SCHOOL DOES:

- Mark the registers in accordance with the law twice a day.
- Maintains records and monitors attendance of students on a regular basis.
- Authorises absences in accordance with the government guidelines. Please note that **only** the school can authorise absence.
- Contacts parents / carers when the attendance falls below acceptable levels and / or when particular patterns of absence are causing concerns.
- Undertake Early Help Assessment where it is deemed appropriate.
- Monitor pupils who are supported by the In Year Fair Access Panel and those who attend alternative provision (please add your attendance arrangements for this).

- Works with external agencies to maintain good attendance and to support the student / family with any issues that may affect attendance and punctuality to school.
- Provides re – integration support for students returning from absence.
- Maintains a range of strategies to encourage good attendance by means of rewards.
- Inform parents of individual pupil's attendance record each term at Parents' Evening.
- Works with relevant external agencies if a students' attendance becomes a concern, ie – Social Care, Early Help Services, Police, YOT, SEND.
- Make referrals to the Local Authority School Attendance Panel where pupils are becoming a cause for concern.
- Make referrals to the School Nurse team where appropriate to seek advice to support the pupil.
- Works in partnership with the Local Authority to improve school attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism sometimes utilising legal interventions.
- Campaign as a means of working with parents to resolve issues affecting attendance.
- In “**exceptional**” circumstances if a child has a reduced timetable the school will follow Sefton Council Guidance.

Appendix 1

Absence from School for Exceptional Circumstances Request Form

Please note:

- We advise that you do not plan for your child to be absent from school without gaining prior agreement from their school first.

Any disagreement between estranged parents should be resolved prior to submitting this request to your child's school.

School Name:					
Student/Pupil Details					
Name:		Date of birth:		Class/Form:	
Address:					
Contact Numbers:					
Sibling Details of Compulsory School Age (or other children living in the household)					
Name:		Date of birth:		School:	
Name:		Date of birth:		School:	
I request permission for my child to be absent from school between: -					
Date of First Day School Absence:		Date of Return to School:		Total of Absent School Days:	
Please detail below the reason for your request for absence from school in term time and include any supporting information.					
<i>Please note the school day is divided into 2 registration periods, for example if your child is absent for one day this equals 2 sessions and a five day absence equals 10 sessions.</i>					

Signed:
(Parent/Carer)

Date:

Full Name:

- **For School Use Only**

The school has considered your request for leave of absence and your child's absences will be recorded as follows: -

Number of Authorised Sessions:		Number of Unauthorised Sessions:		Number of Unauthorised sessions to date:	
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Signed:	
Position:	Date:

Original signed and completed forms to be retained with pupil's records.

Copy should be returned to the parent/carer of the pupil to confirm authorised or unauthorised absence prior to the intended absence period.