

The Romero Catholic Academy

Attendance and Exceptional Leave Policy

2016 ~ 2018

Responsible for Policy:
Date of Policy:
Date of Review:

CC3
April 2017
April 2017



CARDINAL WISEMAN
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The Romero Catholic Academy

Attendance & Exceptional Leave Policy

Introduction

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the best progress possible. To do this it is essential that a child's time at school is maximised and even short absences can have a detrimental effect on children's learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines, so, in addition to affecting your own child, it may also affect the learning of others in the same class. **Early poor attendance habits follow right through from primary to secondary school and into employment.**

We expect all children to be at school, and on time, every day that the school is open, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage children to attend.

At our school, we believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

1 Legal Requirements and Local Authority Policy

1.1 Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

1.2 Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

1.3 There is no automatic right to any leave of absence and all schools in Coventry are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising exceptional leave. Being mindful of this, only in very exceptional circumstances will the school grant leave of absence during term time.

1.4 Further guidance can be found in the Exceptional Leave section of this policy.

1.5 Any leave taken without authorisation can lead to parents being issued a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued, which is currently £60 per parent per child, to be paid within 21 days (the fine doubles to £120 per parent per child after 21 days). After 28 days the matter is referred to the Local Authority for non-payment and can result in court action being taken.

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2 What is the difference between Authorised and Unauthorised Absence?

2.1 Authorised absence

2.1.1 An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

2.1.2 Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours or if a child is absent for their birthday, this will not make it an authorised absence.

2.1.3 Your child's attendance is monitored on a regular basis by staff in school. If your child has regular periods of absence or their attendance falls below a certain level, the school may notify you that in future, absences will only be authorised where medical evidence is provided. The Partnership Attendance Officer may also be asked to contact you on the schools behalf to discuss concerns about your child's attendance.

2.1.4 Wherever possible, the school would expect medical appointments to be arranged out of school hours. Where this is not possible, an appointment card / letter will need to be provided in order for the session to be authorised. Your child is expected to attend before and / or after the appointment when possible.

2.2 Unauthorised absence

2.2.1 An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

2.2.2 Absences will be unauthorised where no contact is made by parents to explain why their child is absent each day. Absences will also be unauthorised where medical evidence has been requested and has not been provided by parents.

2.2.3 The Partnership Attendance Officer may be asked to contact you on the schools behalf to discuss concerns about your child's attendance.

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3 Procedures

3.1 Registration

3.1.1 The school day timings are on your school website.

3.1.2 The register is taken once the children have settled into class. If a child is not present when the register is taken they are given a N mark (not present). If a child arrives at school later than the school day start time they are given a Late mark. Office or teaching staff will record the number of minutes late on SIMS.

3.1.3 If your child arrives to school after the registers have been checked by the office at 9:30 then they will be given a U code. This means your child is recorded as having an unauthorised absence and this will show on their attendance as a missed session.

3.1.4 The sessions timings for Nursery are on your school website. Persistent absence in Nursery may result in your child being removed from the roll.

3.2 Written notification of absence

3.2.1 When the child returns to school, a note must be brought from a parent or guardian to explain the absence.

3.2.2 Where the absence is because of a pre-arranged medical appointment, for example, the note should be sent to the school prior to the day of absence.

3.3 If a child is absent without notification

3.3.1 Where no notification has been received by 9.30 am a text message/call will automatically be sent to the parents/carers via the school's School Com's messaging service.

3.3.2 If there is no response to the message, the absence will automatically be unauthorised.

3.3.3 If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child or concerns for their wellbeing, the office staff or class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school's Learning Mentor, who will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child. If appropriate, a home visit may be carried out by members of school staff or the Local Authority.

3.4 Missing children

3.4.1 If a child is missing and their whereabouts are unknown, the school will follow the Local Authority procedures in taking immediate steps to locate that child as soon as possible.

3.4.2 The school Attendance Officer will complete the relevant Missing Child paperwork and notify the Local Authority's Children and Families First Service, or Social Care.

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4 Requests for exceptional leave of absence during term time

4.1 Leave of absence during term time will only be authorised in very exceptional and unavoidable circumstances that present themselves at short notice.

4.2 Except in an emergency, permission for any period of leave must be sought from the school before it is due to begin and in advance of making any arrangements.

4.3 Any request must be made on an Exceptional Leave of Absence Form, which can be obtained from the school office. A copy of this form can be found on page 7 of this document.

4.4 Evidence of any travel bookings, if applicable, may be requested by the school.

4.5 Each request for exceptional leave of absence is considered by the head teacher on behalf of Governors. Where necessary, a meeting will be arranged between parents and the head teacher to discuss the application.

4.6 Should the request fall outside the criteria set out in the school's Attendance Policy, the application will be considered by a governor on behalf of the Governing Body.

4.7 Reasons for exceptional leave will be logged on the child's records and will be shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

4.8 Absence for the purpose of a family holiday does not constitute exceptional leave. Where the school suspects that a child is absent due to a holiday, steps will be taken to investigate further. This may involve a home visit during the absence period with a view to having direct contact with you and your child. Parents will also be required to produce evidence (for instance medical evidence) in support of the period of absence in order to avoid the issue of a Penalty Notice and / or prosecution.

4.9 If the pupil is female and from a Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practising of affected community, the Safeguarding Lead will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer and use direct questioning to ascertain whether 'cutting' of the girl will be undertaken during the leave of absence. The Safeguarding Lead will then take the information from this meeting and make a decision on whether to refer to local Referral and Assessment Services or the Police.

5 Holidays during term time

5.1 Taking holidays during term time will affect your child's learning and we expect parents to help us by taking holidays during official school closure periods.

5.2 There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off school to go on holiday. In fact the Local Authority states in its Holidays in Term Time Procedures and Guidance document that **head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

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5.3 If you are planning on taking leave for any purpose during term time, you must notify the school in advance, completing the Exceptional Leave of Absence Form available from the school office. On receipt of this, the head teacher will consider the request and decide whether the leave of absence will be granted (i.e. whether it constitutes exceptional and unavoidable leave). Please note that your child's current level of attendance will be analysed when considering your request. You will be informed of the outcome of your request by letter. A meeting with the head teacher may be arranged if further discussion is required.

5.4 If you take your child on holiday during term time, or where your request for leave has not been granted, your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised holiday. This will result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued, which is currently £60 per parent per child, to be paid within 21 days (the fine doubles to £120 per parent per child after 21 days). After 28 days the matter is referred to the Local Authority for non-payment and can result in court action being taken.

5.5 Where the school suspects that a child is absent due to a holiday, steps will be taken to investigate further. This may involve a home visit during the absence period with a view to having direct contact with you and your child. Parents will also be required to produce evidence (for instance medical evidence) in support of the period of absence in order to avoid the issue of a Penalty Notice and / or prosecution.

6 Long-term absence through accident or illness

6.1 If a child is under the care of a hospital Consultant and a Consultant's letter has been produced, and the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or to be a repetitive absence, the school may contact the support services so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

7 Monitoring

7.1 Class teachers are responsible for monitoring attendance in their class, as well as for taking action on day-to-day absences.

7.2 The Learning Mentor and Partnership Attendance Officer monitor attendance on a fortnightly basis and will issue letters, make telephone calls, arrange school meetings or undertake home visits where necessary to address levels of absence observed.

7.3 School communication for attendance concerns:

Letter 1 advises parents of initial concern that attendance has fallen below expected levels.

Letter 2 requests that parents attend a meeting in school to discuss concerns about attendance.

Letter 3 informs parents that in future, absences will no longer be authorised without production of medical evidence.

Letter 4 informs parents that there has been an improvement in their child's attendance and thanks them for their continued support.

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Letter 5 advises parents that there have been more than five late marks recorded in the past half term.

Letter 6 informs parents that a request for exceptional leave of absence has been declined and that a Penalty Notice will be issued if the leave is taken.

Letter 7 informs parents that a request for exceptional leave has been granted in line with policy.

Letter 8 informs parents that a penalty notice will be issued due to leave of absence.

Letter 9 informs parents that a penalty notice will be issued due to 10 school sessions of unauthorised absence in a 5 week period.

Letter 10 advises parents that a home visit has been carried out by a member of school staff to discuss attendance.

Letter 11 advises parents that their child has been deemed as fulfilling the criteria for 'Missing Child' and that, in line with policy, they will be removed from school roll.

Copies of these standard letters can be found in Appendix A.

7.4 The rates of attendance will be reported in the school prospectus, in the head teacher's report and in the annual governors' report.

8 Repeated unauthorised absences

8.1 If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. In some circumstances a home visit will be undertaken by members of school staff to discuss this with you. The Partnership Attendance Officer may be asked to contact you on the schools behalf to discuss concerns about your child's attendance.

8.2 If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the Children and Families First Service, who may visit the home and seek to investigate further and provide any necessary support. The Children and Families First Service also have the authority to pursue legal action against parents of children with poor attendance where steps are not taken to address this.

9. Persistant Absence

Since the 1st September 2015, the Government has reduced the threshold from 15% to 10% for persistant absence. This will now class a child with attendance below 90% as a persistent absentee. This equates to 38 sessions or 19 days of absence across the year. Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to fulfil their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure that regular attendance is maintained. The Department for Education has published data on their website that clearly shows the link between attendance and attainment.

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Children below 90% attendance will have daily focussed monitoring by school and outside agents. We are confident that you will be keen to work with us to ensure that your child meets the new threshold requirements since it is clear that this will have a positive effect on their learning.

10 Rewards for good attendance

10.1 All the children who have 100 per cent attendance in any one term will receive recognition for their attendance, awarded at the last assembly of the term. There are special incentives for any child who has 100 per cent attendance for a whole year.

10.2 The class with the highest attendance each week will receive recognition and will be mentioned in the school newsletter.

11 Review

The policy will be reviewed by the Governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

Next Review Date: September 2018

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APPLICATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

This application must be submitted to the head teacher before the proposed period of exceptional leave. In case of emergency, this form must be completed beforehand, as far in advance as possible.

As recommended by the Local Authority, the school has a strict policy on Exceptional Leave. This applies to **ALL** the children of the school community. A copy of this and the school's Attendance Policy can be obtained from the school office and from the school's website.

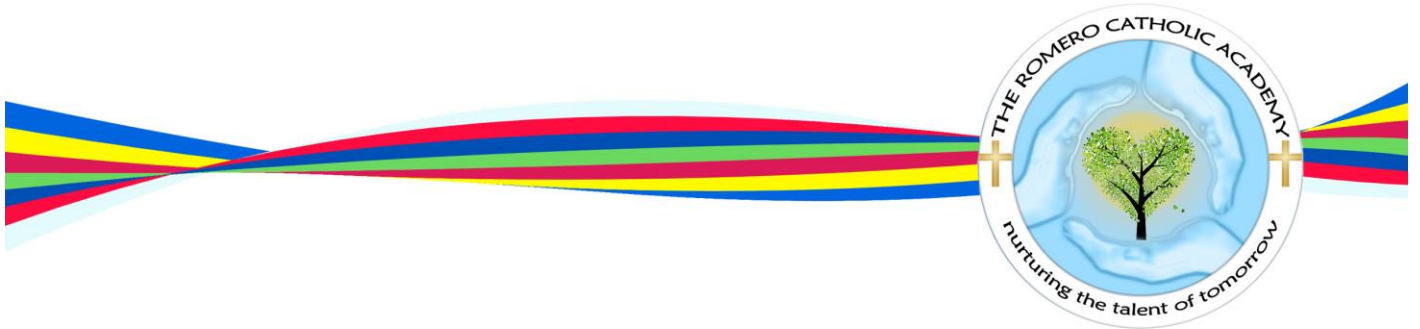
Name of child		Class
Proposed date(s) of absence	From:	To:
Siblings at other schools	Name & DOB of child(ren)	Name of school
Reason for proposed absence (please continue on the reverse of this sheet if necessary)		
Signature of parent/guardian	Name of parent/guardian	Date of request

Your application will be considered by the Head teacher. There may be circumstances where a meeting will be arranged for you to discuss your application with the head teacher. Evidence of travel bookings may be required. Your child's attendance record will be taken into consideration.

If permission is refused and your child is absent for the above period, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence and you may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice. Similarly, if you child fails to return on the agreed date, the same may apply. If your child is absent for a prolonged period without agreement, your child can lose their school place and will be removed from roll.

For official use only:		
Action	Initials	Date
Seen by Head teacher		
Head teacher's comments (e.g. in support or on attendance record)		
Evidence provided by the parent to support the request		

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Appendix A

Standardised written correspondence to parent(s) / carers regarding attendance

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 1

Dear

As you will be aware has missed time from school over the last half term.

This means that your child's attendance has fallen below the national expectation of 97%. It is currently%

We understand that absence may have been for illness, un-authorised holidays and/or medical reasons; however, we need to make you aware that we will be monitoring your child's attendance over the coming half term.

As a school, we are working really hard to improve our whole school attendance levels and have a range of rewards and incentives for children who attend well.

This letter is for your **information only**. If you would like to see your child's attendance certificate please feel free to contact us. We do hope that you will continue to work in partnership with us.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 2

Dear.....

We would like to inform you that your child's attendance is a significant cause for concern and is having an impact upon their learning.

We monitor the attendance of all children on a regular basis and have a duty to intervene where appropriate.

To avoid any further action in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice, please attend a meeting at the school on

Date:

Time:

to discuss attendance. We look forward to meeting with you.

As a school, we are working really hard to improve our whole school attendance levels and have a range of rewards and incentives for children who attend well. We do hope that you will continue to work in partnership with us.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 3

Dear.....

We have been in touch with you previously to make you aware that attendance had fallen below expected levels.

Your child has had a significant amount of time off school for medical reasons. Our records show that this academic year, your child has missed sessions due to illness.

We continually monitor the attendance of all children. It is important that wherever possible, your child attends school every day unless they are medically unfit to do so. In order to continue to authorise your child's medical absences, the school now require written medical evidence from your GP or hospital consultant for each period of absence.

If you feel that illness is an on-going cause for concern, please arrange to speak with our Learning Mentor who will be happy to discuss the issue and offer any support needed.

To clarify, future absences for illness will not be authorised without the production of medical evidence. Unauthorised absences can have legal implications.

As a school, we are working really hard to improve our whole school attendance levels and have a range of rewards and incentives for children who attend well. We do hope that you will continue to work in partnership with us.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 4

Dear

It has come to our attention that attendance has improved over the last half term and is currently at%. A copy of his/her (delete as appropriate) registration certificate if attached.

As a school, we recognise this achievement and would like to commend you all on this improvement.

Please remember that we are working really hard to improve our whole school attendance levels and have a range of rewards and incentives for children who attend well.

Please can you continue to provide medical evidence untilattendance is at 97%. *(delete if not applicable)*.

We do hope that you will continue to work in partnership with us.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 5

Dear

Our attendance records show that has been late on occasions during the last half term. We are sure you will understand that lateness can be very upsetting for the child who is late and for other children in the class. It is also very disruptive to the school day and young peoples' learning.

Why is Good Punctuality Important?

- 5 minutes late will mean your child loses 3 learning days every year!
- Good punctuality shows a pupil is ready and willing to work.
- Late arrival to class causes disruption for other pupils, and to the lesson.
- Good punctuality is habit forming, so it is important that you arrive on time from an early age.
- Arriving early provides time for a chat with your friends.
- To prevent intervention from the Local Authority.

May we take this opportunity to remind you that the school day begins at 8:55am and children have access to school from 8:45 (please amend times as appropriate). We do hope that you continue to work with the school to ensureprompt arrival in the future.

If you have any queries or would like to talk to someone about punctuality or attendance, please contact myself or the Learning Mentor and we will be happy to make an appointment to discuss any issues you or your child might have. We do want to help.

Thank you for your co-operation,

Yours sincerely,

Principal

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 6

Dear

We confirm receipt of your application for exceptional leave of absence, for the purposes of for dates to..... which is a total ofschool days.

The school only authorises leave taken during term time where it is considered to be under exceptional circumstances. It is with regret that we have to refuse your request for leave of absence for on this occasion because it does not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances.

In line with Local and National Policy these absences will be recorded as unauthorised on your child's registration certificate. Therefore, if you proceed with the leave as planned you may be issued with a Penalty Notice. This is currently £60 per parent per child, to be paid within 21 days (the fine doubles to £120 per parent per child after 21 days). After 28 days the matter is referred to the Local Authority for non-payment and can result in court action being taken.

As a school, we are working really hard to improve our whole school attendance levels and have a range of rewards and incentives for children who attend well. We do hope that you will continue to work in partnership with us.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 7

Dear.....

We confirm receipt of your application for exceptional leave, for the purposes of between the dates ofand

The school only authorises leave taken during term time where it is considered to be under exceptional circumstances.

We would like to inform you that on this occasion we can authorise your request for leave of absence stated above. This is a total ofschool day/s and these will be recorded on your child's attendance certificate as authorised. Should your child fail to return to school on the agreed date, subsequent absences will be recorded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice could be issued.

As a school, we are working really hard to improve our whole school attendance levels and have a range of rewards and incentives for children who attend well. We do hope that you will continue to work in partnership with us.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 8

Dear

It has come to our attention that has taken leave of absence from, to This leave of absence was not authorised by the school.

The school's attendance policy makes it clear that where a holiday is taken in term time, and therefore has not been authorised, a Penalty Notice may be issued.

The school will now be requesting a Penalty notice to be issued against you. You will receive notification from Coventry City Council in due course.

The Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent of each child. Each Penalty Notice will be £60 if it is paid within 21 days. It will increase to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice could result in Coventry City Council starting legal proceedings against you for the offence of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 9

Dear

It has come to our attention that has missed a minimum of 10 school sessions (i.e 5 school days) in a 5 week period from..... to These missed sessions were not authorised by the school. A copy of registration certificate is attached.

We continually monitor the attendance of all children, therefore we need to inform you that despite previous efforts to support and inform you, your child's attendance is still a significant cause for concern and is having an impact on their learning.

The school's attendance policy makes it clear that where persistent absence arises and attempts by the school have been made to improve your child's attendance, a Penalty Notice may be issued. The school will now be requesting a Penalty notice to be issued against you. You will receive notification from Coventry City Council in due course.

The Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent of each child. Each Penalty Notice will be £60 if it is paid within 21 days. It will increase to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice could result in Coventry City Council starting legal proceedings against you for the offence of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 10

Dear

We called out today to discuss’s attendance with you.

We are aware that (*insert current situation before printing*).

We are quite concerned and would like to be of help and support.

We have been in touch with you previously to make you aware thats attendance has fallen below expected levels. Their attendance is currently%

Please contact school as a matter of urgency to discuss this further.

As a school, we are working really hard to improve our whole school attendance levels and have a range of rewards and incentives for children who attend well.

We do hope that you will continue to work in partnership with us and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Learning Mentor

The Romero Catholic Academy

LETTER 11

Dear.....

(forename, surname, registration)

As failed to attend school on the expected date of return, and we have received no communication from you, it leaves us no alternative but to remove your child from our school roll with immediate effect.

Schools have a duty to remove pupils who fail to return within 10 school days of the agreed return date which was or after 20 days of unauthorised absence and as a result we have a legal obligation to advise the “Children Missing from Education” Department within the Local Authority that is no longer attending this School.

We would strongly advise that you contact the Local Authority Education Admissions Dept. in your area, to establish which alternative schools are available to your child.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

The Romero Catholic Academy

HOW GOOD IS YOUR CHILD'S ATTENDANCE?

