



# Pupil Attendance Policy

October 2020

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### **Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi Academy Trust Mission Statement**

We are a partnership of Catholic schools and our aim is to provide the very best Catholic education for all in our community and so improve life chances through spiritual, academic and social development.

We will achieve this by:

Placing the life and teachings of Jesus Christ at the centre of all that we do.

Following the example of Our Lady of Lourdes by nurturing everyone so that we can all make the most of our God given talents.

Working together so that we can all achieve our full potential, deepen our faith and know that God loves us.

Being an example of healing, compassion and support for the most vulnerable in our society.

**MATTHEW 28:19-20** *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

## 1. CORE PRINCIPLES

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust (CMAT) is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all students. The trust sincerely believes that all pupils benefit from the education it provides and therefore from regular school attendance. To this end the trust will do as much as it can to ensure that all students achieve maximum possible attendance and that any issues, which may impede full attendance, are acted upon as quickly as possible.

Student performance and well-being go hand in hand. Students can't learn if they don't feel safe or if ill health problems are allowed to create barriers.

The law states that parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure that children within their care attend school regularly. Schools and the local authority have a duty to ensure that poor school attendance is dealt with swiftly.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, section 23, sub-section (1) added two new sections (444A and 444B) after section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These new sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under section 444 and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty. The offence of irregular attendance under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 has not changed.

Within Our Lady of Lourdes (CMAT) we have schools operating under Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Derbyshire County Council's Code of Conduct. (See Appendix A)

## 2. COVID-19 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#attendance>

In March, when the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was increasing, we made clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

Now the circumstances have changed, it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age

- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.

## **Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating**

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future, there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children was paused on 1 August 2020 which means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who were shielding - read the [current advice on shielding](#)
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, may be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and, therefore, they may be temporarily unable to attend
- pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional are likely to discuss their care with their health professional at their next planned clinical appointment - you can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#)

Specialists in paediatric medicine have reviewed the latest evidence on the level of risk posed to children and young people from coronavirus (COVID-19). The latest evidence indicates that the risk of serious illness for most children and young people is low. In the future, we expect fewer children and young people will be included on the shielded patient list.

Patients can only be removed from the shielding patient list by their GP or specialist, following consultation with the child and their family, and other clinicians where appropriate. If a child or young person is removed from the shielded patient list in due course, they will no longer be advised to shield in the future if coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission increases. Discussion by a clinician with those previously advised that they were a clinically vulnerable child or young person but can now be removed from the shielded patient list, and with their families are ongoing. Since shielding advice has paused nationally, except in a very few areas where the implementation of local restrictions is ongoing, all previously affected children should be able to return to school except where individual clinical advice not to do so has been provided.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access

to remote education. Schools should monitor engagement with this activity as set out in the [action for all schools and local authorities section](#).

Where children are not able to attend school as parents and carers are following clinical or public health advice, for example, self-isolation or family isolation, the absence will not be penalised.

### **Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school**

All other pupils must attend school. Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance).

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION**

This policy received the full agreement of the executive board: Oct 2020

### **4. AIMS**

**Our Lady of Lourdes CMAT recognises that;**

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure attendance at school as required by law.
- Some pupils and their parents/carers may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils, parents or carers may impact on attendance. We will, with agreement and support of parent/carers, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as

wellrounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their society.

## **5. EXPECTATIONS:**

### **We expect the following from parents/carers;**

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually
- To ensure that they contact their children's school on the first morning of absence whenever their children are unable to attend, as appropriate. This should always be the first day of absence and everyday thereafter until the child returns to school
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework
- To contact their children's school whenever any problem occurs that may affect performance
- That they will inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending

### **We expect the following from all our pupils;**

- That they attend school regularly
- That they will be on time and be appropriately equipped for the day.

### **Parents and students can expect the following from Our Lady of Lourdes Trust;**

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing a reason
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us
- Rewarding good attendance
- A quality education
- Education welfare officer working across the academy trust to provide support, advice and guidance to students, parents and carers for all aspects of school attendance

## **6. ENCOURAGING GOOD ATTENDANCE IN SCHOOL:**

### **Attendance is encouraged in the following ways**

- Accurate completion of registers in school
- Attendance checks at appropriate times

- Recording of good attendance on individual progress reports
- OLoL CMAT Schools will aim to provide either an Education welfare officer who works across one the academy hub to identify and provide support, advice and guidance to pupils and their families who have attendance issues in the feeder primary school as part of any transition work between KS2 and KS3 or an Inclusions officer who will provide the above assistance in their own school.
- Establishing a mechanism for supporting those parents and carers who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty attending, including home visits by the education welfare officer if necessary
- An efficient use of computerised registration systems can provide valuable attendance data which can assist speedy analysis and timely responses by the academy
- Sending parents termly/weekly absence figures as appropriate including positive letters of encouragement
- An 'improved attendance' award for any students showing a significant improvement in attendance, as appropriate
- Celebrating outstanding attendance during achievement assemblies every half term in school, as appropriate

## **7. PUNCTUALITY**

The importance of arriving at school on time

- Arriving late at school may cause embarrassment for the child
- Pupils' arriving late is disruptive, not only to their own learning but the learning of others.
- Pupils may miss something important such as lesson plans or instructions on how to complete a piece of work
- Lateness can affect how students form friendship groups. Social interaction with peers before school is important.
- Pupils are marked present. The register is not only a legal document it also provides evidence that pupils have arrived in school and are safe.
- Punctuality shows reliability and is a valuable attribute for future working life. Future universities, colleges and employers look for reliability. A good record of attendance and punctuality is an indication of this and they may request to see this in the future.

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate (DfE Guidance July 2019). Our Lady of Lourdes recommends that the register closes 30 minutes after it is opened.

Arriving after the session closes, is recorded as an unauthorised absence. It is important to note that this will mean a full session of absence is recorded on the register and therefore has an impact on a pupil's overall attendance figure. If unauthorised absence continues, parents/carers will be contacted and a meeting will be arranged to discuss this. If no improvement is made, a Penalty Notice may be requested from the relevant Local Authority.

## **8. LEAVE OF ABSENCE and RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE**

Parents should report absences on the first day of any illness before the start of the day and continue to report on subsequent days. Only persons with Parental/Carer Responsibility can report absences. Parents/Carers can report via their school's Gateway app/School Coms/texting or via email. CMAT Schools will not accept a verbal message from a child. If we do not receive a message the absence will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

**Home visits where pupils don't attend school:** When a pupil is absent from school, and no reason for absence is received, the school will contact parents/carers by text message and phone calls. In the event we are unable to make contact regarding the absence, the school may try other contacts held on a child's record and/or reserve the right to make an unannounced home visit.

**Medical Appointments:** Parents must notify the school in advance of any medical appointments and provide evidence of the appointment. Wherever possible, medical appointments should be made outside of school hours.

**Medical sick notes:** where students have had on-going regular absence, medical evidence would need to be provided.

Our Lady of Lourdes CMAT has a structured response for dealing with attendance concerns. When attendance falls below the expected level of 97% close monitoring will be put in place.

We will communicate our concerns with parents/carers if attendance falls below our expected levels. This may be in writing, by telephone or in person – through home visits or parent meetings.

### **Attendance Officer**

The academy trust employs an office staff member who works with families to overcome any barriers that may be preventing a student from attending regularly.

### **Attendance meetings**



Parents/Carers of students with poor attendance may be invited to attend an attendance meeting. This may include a variety of professionals involved with student welfare. The aim of this meeting is to improve future attendance and prevent the need for referral to the relevant Local Authority to begin legal processes

Should poor attendance continue then a referral shall be made to the relevant Authority for further action (see below)

Nottingham City Council – should a student accrue 10% unauthorised absence over a 10 week period, a request for service, for a Penalty Notice or enforcement action may be made to Nottingham City Council Education Welfare Service.

Nottinghamshire County Council - should a student accrue in excess of 3 days over a 6 week rolling period, a request for a Penalty Notice may be made, or a referral made to the Family Service for enforcement action.

## **9. LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME**

Our Lady of Lourdes CAMT will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Each school within the trust will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion and is **not a parental right**. In accordance with government guidelines, the application must be made 12 days in advance by completing a leave of absence request form. The application form is available from individual schools within the academy trust by request. The head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave.

If parents take pupils on holiday during term time Our Lady of Lourdes CMAT schools will not provide extra work; students will be expected to catch up with any work they have missed when they return from the holiday.

**Our Lady of Lourdes CMAT schools may agree a 'leave of absence' in the following exceptional circumstances:**

- for service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education; and
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

**Our Lady of Lourdes Trust will not agree a 'leave of absence in circumstances such as:**

- Availability of cheap holidays;
- Availability of desired accommodation;
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term.

Leave of absence that has not been approved will therefore be unauthorised and may lead to a referral being made to the local authority for action.

- Schools within Nottingham City Council, a Penalty notice will be requested if an unauthorised holiday is taken of 5 continuous days (10 sessions).
- Schools within Nottinghamshire County Council, a Penalty Notice will be requested if an unauthorised holiday is taken in excess of 3 days/6sessions (over a 6 week rolling period)
- Schools within Derbyshire County Council; a Penalty Notice will be requested if parents/carers fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as six or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six week period.

Penalties are set at £60.00 per parent per student if paid within 21 days of issue, if not paid within 21 days the fine doubles to £120 if paid within 28 days. Where a fine remains unpaid the matter may be enforced at the Magistrates Court, under Section 444, Education Act 1996. The maximum fine for this offence is £1000 per parent, per child.

Nottingham City Council will not issue Penalty Notices on more than three occasions for an individual child, in an academic year.

Nottinghamshire County Council will not issue more than two penalty notices per calendar year to any person taking more than two periods of unauthorised absence. Where further absences occur or where the local authority deem it appropriate, enforcement may be dealt with directly by the court.

## **10. TRUANCY**

Pupils who are discovered to have truanted will be spoken to by the designated member of staff will be informed of what has happened. Pupils will be asked for the reasons for their truancy to see if there are underlying problems as the root cause. Parents will be contacted and kept informed of events. As a punishment, the truant will be expected to make up the number of hours they have missed in school detentions. All incidents of truancy will be recorded as unauthorised.

As a follow-up the student will receive an appropriate sanction.

## **11. Off-Site Provision**

Where the school uses off-site providers the responsibilities for external partners is to ensure the following:

- Accurately register student(s) on placement.
- Notify the academy before 10.00am of any student absence.
- E-mail/post weekly attendance registers to nominated member of staff at the academy.
- Alert school, (Attendance Officer or nominated staff) immediately in the event of a student leaving the provider's premises without prior authorisation from academy.

## 12. Children Missing in Education

- Attendance, absence and exclusions are closely monitored. A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.
- The designated staff will monitor unauthorised absences and take appropriate action including notifying the local authority particularly where children go missing on repeat occasions and/or are missing for periods during the school day in conjunction with '**Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities**<sup>1</sup>
- Staff must be alert to signs of children at risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

## 13. Anxiety Related Non-Attendance (ARNA)

Where a student is believed to be experiencing anxiety, the academy will liaise with parents/carers and make initial assessment by interview and completion of the ARNA Attendance Policy assessment documentation.

If agreed strategies fail to improve school attendance and the wellbeing of the student, further strategies will be considered. The academy will ensure that the school systems adhere to the document **Guidance to Schools: A Graduated Response to School Non-Attendance**<sup>2</sup> (which must be used for SEND/SEMH needs), in order to best support early identification of anxiety related issues.

The academy will ensure that the existing systems around analysing absence are able to identify the different types of unauthorised absence i.e. anxiety related, truancing or parent/carer condoned and appropriate support implemented.

Should a parent/carer have any concerns regarding their child's mental health or wellbeing, they should contact the academy immediately.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>

<sup>2</sup>

If a child has long term absence, the academy endeavours to maintain regular communication with the student and family. School will seek support from professional outside agencies to provide additional help to the student and family.

Please refer to: **Anxious Learners & Anxiety Related Non-Attendance (ARNA): Guidance for Schools<sup>3</sup>**

## 14. Agency Liaison

Research has shown that schools in partnership with the full range of support services have a greater impact on school attendance than when they act alone or when the support services are uncoordinated or disjointed. .

There are the many support services we can work with to improve the outcomes for our students

- Faith in Families
- Targeted Support; Family Services.
- Educational Psychologists.
- School health
- Social care
- Youth Offending Team
- Police
- CAMHS
- Missing in Education Teams
- Admissions Teams

## Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard to the requirements of the Act. Each school has a Data Protection Notification which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the police or social services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

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<sup>3</sup>

<file:///olol-dc-01/Folder%20Redirection/m.dales/Downloads/Anxious%20Learners%20and%20ARNA%20-%20Guidance%20for%20Schools.pdf>

Date Issued/Ratification	15 <sup>th</sup> October 2020
Date of Review	Review annually  July 2021
Reviewer	Standards Committee / OLoL Trust Board
Author	Moira Dales

**Appendix A:** Our Lady of Lourdes CMAT Schools and Designated Local Authority.

<b>Nottingham City Council Schools:</b>	<b>Nottinghamshire County Council Schools:</b>	<b>Derbyshire County Council:</b>
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<p>The Trinity School  St Marys Hyson Green  Our Lady of Perpetual Succour  St Teresa's Aspley  St Augustines St Anns  Blessed Robert Widmerpool  Clifton,  Our Lady &amp; St Edward St Anns  St Patrick's Catholic Primary and  Nursery School Wilford:</p>	<p>The Becket School West  Bridgford  St Edmund Campion Catholic  Primary  Christ the King Arnold  The Good Shepherd Arnold  St Margaret Clitherow Bestwood  Sacred Heart Carlton  Holy Cross Hucknall  All Saints Mansfield  St Philip Neri Mansfield  St Patricks Mansfield.  St Josephs Ollerton  Holy Trinity Newark</p>	<p>St Josephs Shirebrook.</p>
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