



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Maricourt seeks to provide and sustain a living Catholic Community which is rooted in Christian Values and where growth and knowledge, respect, love and fellowship are shared by all.

**Governor approval
September 2018**

Contents

Aims	2
Statutory Framework.....	2
The Importance of Regular Attendance.....	3
Promoting Regular Attendance	3
Absence procedures	3
The Team	9
Guidance	9
Appendix	10

Aims

The school aims to develop the whole person by keeping Christian truths and Gospel values before young people's minds and by encouraging them to live by such truths and values, however hard contemporary culture makes this; thereby forming young adults who have a well-rooted sense of relationship with Christ and His church.

The school aims to maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that all can take full advantage of the learning experiences available to them.

High levels of attendance and punctuality are essential for students to work to their full potential, be successful and benefit from the opportunities available to them at school.

For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly.

Achieving high attendance is a necessity in preparing students for future working life as an adult.

Students should be at the School, *on time every day* that school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that parents and carers recognise the responsibility and obligation they have to make sure that students attend regularly. This policy sets out how the School, its partners and Parents/Carers can work together to achieve this.

Statutory Framework

School attendance is subject to various Education laws including the Education Act 2011 (Student Registration 2007) (England Regulations 2006), (School Attendance Targets) (England, Regulations 2007) (England Regulations 2010). This school policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE).

Schools are responsible for recording student attendance twice each day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all students of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance targets. These will reflect both national and Sefton's attendance targets.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

Maintaining a high level of attendance at Maricourt Catholic High School is the responsibility of everyone involved with the school community including students, parents and staff.

The Importance of Regular Attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence additionally disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring students' regular attendance at school is the **legal responsibility of Parents/Carers**.
By law, all children of compulsory school age must attend school.

Poor attendance not only undermines a child's education and future life chances but it can also put children at risk, can compromise personal safety and encourage anti-social behaviour. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a habit of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – Parents/Carers, students and all members of school staff.

To maintain a focus on this the School will:

Report to Parents/Carers regularly on how their child is performing at school. This will include information about their attendance and punctuality.

Celebrate good attendance in assemblies on a regular basis, through daily Tutor Time and by displaying individual and class achievements;

Reward good or improving attendance through, certificates, events and trips, both in and outside of school.

Absence procedures

If a student is absent parents should:

- ❖ Contact school by 9am ideally on the first day of absence on the dedicated telephone number with details of the absence i.e. length of absence /reason. Where this is not known then the parent should call school daily to report the absence until the child returns to school.
- ❖ Send a note in on the first day that the student returns with an explanation of the absence
- ❖ Provide some form of medical evidence for absences that extend to a week or beyond (5 school days; this can be in the form of a Doctor's note, copy of a prescription or sight of prescribed medication.

If a student is absent the school will endeavour to contact parents/carers via telephone or text parents each day of absence if a message (that explains the absence) has not been received.

This will then trigger a staged response.

1. The attendance team will inform the Progress Leader of the absence
2. The Progress leader will discuss this with the Form Tutor
3. The Progress leader will speak to the student
4. Parents may be invited to school to speak with the Progress Leader
5. Senior Leaders with responsibility for Attendance will hold a panel interview with parents and students
6. The Local Authority will be contacted

Contacts

There are times when school will need to contact parent for a range of issues via telephone, text or email, including absence, so it is essential that the school has up to date contact numbers at all times. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers and email addresses throughout the year and we ask parents / carers to inform us of any changes.

Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If students are late at the start of the day they can miss assemblies, work, vital information and news for the day and do not spend time with their Form Tutor. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons. Persistent poor punctuality will result in sanctions being applied e.g. an attendance or punctuality detention and potentially a contract.

How we manage lateness

The school day begins at 8.50, a bell is rung and students are expected to be registered in *their Form class* at 8.55am.

Students can access the Dining Room from 8 am (but should remain there until 8.45am when they can go to their form classrooms)

Registration is called during this time. Students are marked late if they are not present when the register is taken.

Registers are closed at 9.05 am.

In accordance with the Regulations, if students arrive after **9.30** they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an **unauthorised absence**.

Students who experience punctuality or attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their Form Tutor and, if the need should arise, from their Student Progress Leader/Assistant Student Progress Leader.

If a student has a persistent late record, parents/carers may be asked to meet with the Progress leader.

Students whose punctuality and/or attendance are very good will be presented with awards.

If a student is prevented for any reason from attending and parents have not notified the school the absence must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is forthcoming from the parents.

Parents will be informed of any concerns that may arise over a child's attendance.

Parents whose first language is not English, or who have literacy difficulties, will be offered appropriate support from the school in matters of communication.

Parents/Carers can approach the school at any time if they experience problems getting their child to the school on time.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the Parents/Carers), as either *AUTHORISED* or *UNAUTHORISED*.

Registers are taken twice a day by staff to record attendance marks. Registers are legal documents so the school staff are obliged to complete them accurately. Attendance marks are also recorded at every lesson to monitor student punctuality and guard against truancy. Information about the cause of any absence is always required from parents/carers, preferably in writing.

Authorised absence

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in School time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Medical appointments, if possible, should be made as late in the day as possible to allow your child to be registered for the afternoon session. Medical appointments should not take all day.

Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave of absence" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- ❖ parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily
- ❖ truancy before or during the school day
- ❖ absences which have never been properly explained
- ❖ children who arrive at school too late to get a mark. (registers close at 9.05am each day).
- ❖ a child arriving late after that time will be recorded as U (unauthorised).
- ❖ shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- ❖ day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- ❖ oversleeping
- ❖ absent to look after an unwell sibling
- ❖ inadequate uniform
- ❖ confusion over term dates

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school.

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between school, parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, parents/carers should not condone their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending as this gives the child the impression that attendance does not matter.

Exceptional leave in term time

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off during school term time to have exceptional leave. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice/Fine.

Holiday during Term Time

It is the school's policy not to grant holidays in term time.

Exceptional Leave

Students have a total of 13 weeks holiday a year so Parents/Carers should only request that they be able to take their child out of school under **exceptional circumstances**.

This is known as exceptional leave and must be applied for in writing addressed to the Headteacher. In this letter Parents/Carers should make clear the reasons why it is necessary to take their child(ren) out of school and why these are exceptional.

Taking holidays in term time will affect a student's education and is not acceptable.

All application letters for exceptional leave must be made two weeks in advance of the event.

It is at the discretion of the Headteacher that **a maximum of 5 days in any academic year may be authorised**.

In making a decision the Headteacher will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

Medical appointments

Parents should avoid making medical or dental appointments for their child during school hours; if an appointment has to be made during the school day we expect the student to be in before and/or after the appointment, depending on the time. The School *will not authorise a full day's absence for a medical appointment such as dentist/orthodontist*. If a student is absent for the full day we will mark them as unauthorised for either the AM or PM roll call.

Persistent absenteeism [as per Government guidance]

When a student becomes a 'persistent absentee' the Local Authority has to be notified.

This applies when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects.

The school expects parents' full support and co-operation to tackle this.

This could involve Parents/carers coming to an Attendance Panel at school to develop an Individual Attendance Plan to improve the situation.

If student attendance still fails to improve this becomes a **Serious Behaviour Concern**.

In most cases this can be resolved within school via Progress Leaders and the Attendance Team

Failing that the school will then use a range of strategies to resolve the situation.

These include:

- ❖ Multi-Agency Meeting (Social Care, School Nurse, CAMHS, Youth Offending Team, Young Carers etc.
- ❖ Early help assessment referral
- ❖ Fixed Term penalty for Parent/Carer
- ❖ Educational Supervision Order (Magistrates Court)
- ❖ Prosecution of Parent/Carer. (Magistrates Court)

All absence is monitored thoroughly and regularly.

Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absentee mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority.

Parents/Carers will be informed of the concern immediately. We automatically inform Parents/Carers when absence passes 5%. Persistent absentee students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. This may also be combined with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Procedures for following up absence

A reason for a period of absence is always required. We will contact parents who have not offered a reason and will mark the absence as unauthorised if no reason is provided.

If a student is absent without explanation, the form tutor will ask the student to provide a letter from his/her parent to explain the absence. If an explanation is not received a letter will be sent to the parents. The absence will remain unauthorised unless an acceptable explanation is received.

If a student is persistently absent, or late, and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer during his/her consultation visit.

All messages from parents regarding absence/lateness are recorded for reference.

Penalty Notice proceedings

Penalty Notices for absence from school can be issued by the Attendance and Welfare Service based on requests from schools.

Maricourt Catholic High School follows the most recent 'Procedures for Issuing Education-related Penalty Notices' from Sefton Council (April 2015).

The circumstances in which a penalty notice for non-attendance may be issued include:

- ❖ Parentally condoned absence
- ❖ Unauthorised leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances
- ❖ Unwarranted delayed return from leave of absence (without school agreement)
- ❖ Persistent late arrival after the register has closed
- ❖ Part of the legal process between the school and local authority (i.e. at Attendance Panel Reviews)
- ❖ Truancy, including attendance and exclusion sweeps (formerly truancy sweeps).

A minimum evidential requirement of ten (10) school sessions lost to unauthorised absences by any student in the current term **and/or** eighteen (18) session lost to unauthorised absence over two consecutive terms will also trigger this process.

Payment of a penalty within 21 days of receipt of the notice is £60 for each parent. Payment after this time, but within 28 days of receipt of the notice is £120, [The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013].

Penalty notices may also be issued if students who are excluded appear in a public place without good reason.

Following a request by the school for the issuing of a Penalty Notice a check is made by the Attendance and Welfare Service to ensure that the request meets the terms of the Code of Conduct.

The role of the Educational Welfare Officer

Parents/Carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together.

This is nearly always successful. The Educational Welfare Officer will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist we will invite the Parent/Carer to a school attendance panel.

At this meeting, strategies will be discussed to improve attendance.

Should the situation continue, the Educational Welfare Officer may seek advice from the Local Authority in respect of any legal proceedings.

Children Missing in Education

No child will be removed from roll without consultation between the Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher (Behaviour Safety and wellbeing) and the Educational Welfare Officer. If a child is missing from education with prolonged absences that are unexplained or if a family moves away from the area but does not register with another school, the school will alert the Local Authority who will then take action according to the Child Missing in Education Policy and procedures.

Movement of children between Local Authorities and schools is tracked nationally.

Publication of attendance figures

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance.

The Team

Designated Senior Leads	Miss Julie Bennett Mr Chris Adamson.
Whole school Attendance Officer	Mrs Marie Hunter
Assistant Attendance Officer (years 7+8)	Miss Christine Corkery
Assistant (pt)	Mrs Alison Blacklin
Assistant (pt)	Mrs Catherine Wignall
Assistant (pt) (6 th form)	Mrs Julie Jervis
Learning mentor	Mr Michael Kirby
Learning mentor	Mrs Alison Turner

Local Authority support

Education Welfare Officer	Mrs Jane Shaw
CME Officer	Mrs Carol Blundell
LADO	Mrs Tracy McKeating

Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education-2016>

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

Education Act 2011 Student Registration 2007

England Regulations 2006, School Attendance Targets

England, Regulations 2007) (England Regulations 2010

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Appendix

Our staged approach for persistent absentees

