



Maria Fidelis
Catholic School FCJ

Attendance Policy	
Committee	Curriculum
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Approved By Governing Body	24 th June 2024
Frequency of Review	2 years
Next review Date	Summer 2026

The FCJ Schools' Vision

Our vision is that FCJ schools are communities of personal and academic excellence.

Strong in companionship, the unique giftedness of every person in these faith communities is recognised, nourished and celebrated.

Our hope and expectation is that, through God's grace working in us all, each young person grows into their best self, with zest for life and the generosity and confidence to use their talents and gifts in the service of others.

Maria Fidelis Catholic School FCJ
Attendance Policy



Vision Statement

The vision for Maria Fidelis is to create an inclusive school equipped for the 21st Century which will enable all young people to maximise opportunities, attainment, well-being and wider life chances for everybody to realise their potential in order that they leave school as educated, confident and courageous Catholics, prepared to challenge injustice and care enough to 'live life to the full'. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually.

Aim

Maria Fidelis Catholic School is committed to a positive policy of encouraging pupils to attend school regularly. Our school will work with the parents, students and Camden Education Welfare Service to secure this aim. Our policy also ensures that our school has an efficient system, known to all, for ensuring that pupils who should be attending have registered twice daily or a reason for non-attendance is known to the school in accordance with the Education and Inspection Act 2006 and government requirements.

The Law relating to attendance and safeguarding

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

(a) to age, ability, and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs, he/ she may have either at school or otherwise

Compulsory School Age: A child is compulsory school age from the beginning of the next term after their 5th birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16th birthday.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

This policy meets the requirements of the Working together to improve school attendance 2022 from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Punctuality

Punctuality is an important life skill that your child is expected to develop in order to achieve and to succeed. It is also polite and respectful to be punctual.

Students must arrive in school no later than 8.30am when the school day begins. Students arriving after this time must sign the late book, where their late arrival and the reason, will be recorded. Students arriving after this time will be formally recorded as late.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other children. Lateness is treated seriously by the school. Parents/carers of students who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists parents/carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

In accordance with the London Borough of Camden's policy, we will closely monitor all incidences of lateness and in line with this policy, any student arriving late for school on more than **ten** occasions in a half term period, will be referred to the Education Welfare Service. In cases where improvements are not forthcoming, this may result in a penalty notice issued by Camden Local Authority on behalf of the school.

Absence

The school will not authorise leave during term time, except in exceptional circumstances. All students are expected to be in school, on time, every day, every lesson. 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 school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

If your child is going to be absent from school, we ask you to contact the school student absence line on the first day of absence via telephone. We also ask you to contact us on each subsequent day of non-attendance, and when your child returns to school, we also need you to provide a written note of explanation.

Where your child is absent and no notification has been received, we will endeavour to contact you on by 09.30 to ascertain the reason for non-attendance. If the school is unable to make contact with the parents or a nominated adult, we shall contact social services, as this is a safeguarding matter. If the absence is prolonged i.e. more than one week, we ask you to contact the school at regular intervals. In cases of prolonged absence, medical evidence must be provided and the school can, in liaison with parents, organise for work to be set for completion at home.

In cases where a prolonged absence may result from a medical condition, our school will work in liaison with parents and the Local Authority in making an application for home tuition, where appropriate. In relation to this, the school will work in accordance with the London Borough of Camden's policy - *Access to Education: a policy for children and young people with medical needs (2011)*. In such cases, the first point of contact for parents is the deputy headteacher.

In addition to the above, we monitor the attendance profile of all students on a regular basis. In cases where a student's attendance falls below 95%, your child's Head of Year will contact you so that the reason for the pattern of absences can be discussed in detail. Following such discussions, a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be made for additional support. The school will liaise with Camden's Education Welfare Office in all cases of persistent absence, where the attendance profile for an individual pupil falls below 90% with absences that are unauthorised. The Local Authority may take a range of actions, on behalf of the school, which can include the issuing of a fixed penalty notice or court action.

Term dates

School term dates are published in advance and can be found on the school website.

Whilst every effort is made for common term dates across the council, there are times that term dates may differ if you have children attending more than one school. Please check the term dates on each school website and do not assume each school will have the same term dates.

They are also available from the school office and will be regularly highlighted in the school newsletter.

Staff training days (inset days) are included in the term dates schedule. Parents or carers will receive written notice of any changes in term dates. Those changes would also be published in the calendar on the weekly school newsletter.

Medical Appointments

It is recommended that all medical appointments are arranged outside of school hours. However, in exceptional circumstances, where appointments occur during the school day, we require that written permission is sought in advance, and that arrangements are made for students to be collected from the school reception.

Leave of Absence

Our school policy reflects both the Local Authority's policy and the Government's national policy in that holidays and other trips cannot be taken during term time. If a parent feels that there are **exceptional** circumstances for leave, a letter must be sent to Mr Anthony in the first instance including information on the dates that leave will be required and the reasons for the request. Such applications must be made **well in advance** and may only be made by the parent or the person with parental responsibility with whom the pupil normally resides. The headmaster will consider all such requests and communicate her decision in writing. **It should be noted that approval is only granted in the most exceptional circumstances.**

In cases where leave is taken without authorisation, this will result in the London Borough of Camden issuing a fixed penalty notice, and where appropriate, taking court action, or the possibility of the pupil's name being removed from our School's roll. **It should be noted that the taking of unauthorised absence can result in prosecution under the Education Act 1996.** Parents are strongly advised not to enter into financial undertakings with regard to booking travel, or holiday arrangements without written consent for leave from the headmaster.

Please note that extended leave for sporting, drama or other extra-curricular activities, will not normally be granted as prolonged absence as a result of such activities can have a detrimental effect on a child's educational progress.

The school acknowledges that there may be exceptional circumstances for leave to be granted. The headmaster may seek, where appropriate, advice from the local authority or other agencies before arriving at such a decision.

The school will work in conjunction with Camden's Education Welfare Service with regard to procedures relating to the issuing of fixed penalty notices for concerns about punctuality, unauthorised absence and persistent absence. The school also recognises that the Local Authority has been given a wide range of legal sanctions, which may consist of prosecution under the Education Act of 1996 and/or an education supervision order under the Education Act 1998. These provisions form part of this Attendance Policy.

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. These Notices are issued per parent per child with each individual parent and child dealt with as a separate offence. Where payment of a Penalty Notice is made it enables the parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence, and the offence period and no criminal record is given to the parent.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Head of School, local authority officer or the police. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice

Safeguarding and access to support services

At Maria Fidelis, we believe every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are

committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places your child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses:

Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti-bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

To allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

It is also important for parents to let school know of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances. If you are uncertain about what would be considered a vulnerability, please speak with your child's Head of Year.

Other people you can contact about attendance issues are:

- Your child's form tutor
- The Head of Year
- Attendance Officer

We will see advice on attendance concerns from Camden's Pupil Attendance Service and where appropriate we will seek consent to refer to other support services that can help support pupils and their families to improve attendance.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that level, is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral support system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

If your child has or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence you will be asked to provide evidence for any future absence. This may be medical evidence for illness which can be in the form of prescription, appointment cards, medicine packaging or hospital letter. Where we have concerns about your child's health, we may ask you to talk to the school nurse or for permission to contact their GP or other medical professionals for advice.

Children Missing from School

Aims:

- To locate any missing student quickly
- To ensure that all students are kept safely on school premises in school hours with the exceptions cited above
- To ensure that students who leave the school premises during the school day are appropriately accounted for and the school register is coded correctly
- To ensure that the buildings and premises are safe and secure during school hours
- To ensure that teachers and staff keep students under appropriate and proper supervision at all times.
- To ensure that if a student goes missing during the school day that they are located quickly and returned safely to school or the appropriate venue.

Strategies:

1. All registers must be taken; missing registers must be chased up immediately.
2. Off site visits must adhere to the Educational Visits policy
3. Staff in charge of off-site education provision must inform school of absence on a daily basis and if a pupil goes missing they must follow missing student procedures
4. Students who are signed in late must be entered into the registers by 9.15pm
5. Truancy call will be sent out by the end of the first teaching session
6. Known truants will be regularly checked for attendance
7. If a student is internally truanting then senior staff on duty will search the school premises until the pupil is found followed by a phone call to parent/guardian/social care if the pupil is in public care.
8. If a pupil goes missing and are not on the premises, or are have known to have left the premises, parent/guardian/ social care if the student is in public care, to be informed immediately and the senior member of staff in charge of attendance and, where appropriate,

the school-police liaison officer must be informed. A search of the near vicinity will be made and the police will be informed by the school-police liaison officer if the student is not located within the hour. Parents/guardians /social care to be regularly up dated.

9. The search will continue until the missing child is located.

10. When the student is located, all parties will be informed.

11. An investigation by the deputy headteacher will take place after the event to ensure that all procedures were correctly followed.

12. Pupils who are judged to be a risk to the safety of themselves and of other pupils and staff because they have taken themselves off-site without permission or truanted from school will not be allowed to go on school trips.

For children missing education over a longer period of time, the school will refer to Camden's *Children Missing from Education* guidance.

The role of Governors

There is a School Governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance and who is responsible for school attendance policies and issues. It is their role to be aware of general attendance issues and along with the whole Governing Board inform and oversee school attendance performance initiatives.

Reports and statistics and initiatives to improve school attendance will be shared and consulted on with the Governing Board and documented in Governors meeting minutes (made available to all parents) and the Governors Annual Report.

The Headmaster's Role

The Headmaster will consider every request for leave on its individual merits. Ultimately the Headmaster will be the final arbiter of the authorisation of any leave.

The Headmaster oversees the collection and reporting of attendance data and the publication of statistics and reports on attendance to parents, pupils, governors and to Camden Council. Data used to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohort who need it most. Data will also inform the annual review of the school's attendance policy and practice. An attendance audit is carried out and reported during the summer term of each year. This is available to the local authority and the Department of Education (DfE)

The role of the attendance lead

The attendance lead will work with the headmaster to devise a working attendance policy, reviewed at regular intervals and based on school attendance data.

They will monitor weekly attendance patterns and trends and identify whole school strategies and support for children who are missed school.

The School Attendance Officer (SAO)

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems affecting or likely to affect attendance together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consult with the Pupil Attendance Service. If other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. They may also apply for an Education Supervision Order through the Family Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Pupil Attendance Service.

Matters Relating to School Practice and Procedures

Our School has made arrangements for all children of compulsory school age, and those over compulsory school age, to have their attendance registered twice per day for the morning and afternoon sessions.

Our Attendance Officer ensures that appropriate codings are used and that all incidents of non-attendance are followed up on the day of absence. Our school annually reviews its performance in relation to pupil attendance and sets appropriate targets. These targets and the school's performance is regularly reported to the Governing Body throughout the academic year.

Pastoral team leaders including Heads of Year and assistant headteachers have specific roles in relation to overseeing attendance arrangements and the efficient and effective running of such systems, making regular monitoring checks in relation to the attendance of all pupils and for undertaking appropriate courses of action including referrals to Education Welfare in cases of concern or where additional support is required.

Form tutors are responsible for ensuring that all students are registered accurately, ensuring that they return absence notes after a period of non-attendance, ensuring that all cases of unaccounted for absence are followed up. They are also responsible for monitoring the attendance of all students in their form and bringing matters of concern to the attention of their Head of Year.

Classroom teachers are responsible for recording the attendance of students at their lessons and informing the relevant Head of Year of the names of students who are absent without notification.

Absence escalation day-table

Absence	Action	Outcome
Day 1	If no reason received: first day contact – telephone call / text / email. (Remember to ask for expected return date and for regular updates if absence more than one day).	Parent provides acceptable reason – authorised absence (AA). Reason provided is unacceptable - unauthorised absence (UA) Unable to contact family – check if child is identified as vulnerable –refer to Attendance / Safeguarding Lead
Day 2	If no response at day 1 – repeat above – if no contact, then consider trying emergency contacts	If contact made – as above school decide if absence should be AA or UA. If no contact made refer to Attendance Lead & check with support staff / school friends, consider home visit.
Day 3	If no response at days 1 & 2. Carry out home visit. If parents have responded but absence is UA issue school warning letter	Home visit – if no response leave note – if appropriate check with neighbours (mindful of data protection). Parents provide evidence for absence then AA if don't UA
Day 4	If no contact from family or emergency contacts	Check with senior school to see if known and ask for advice.
Day 5	If no contact from family or reason provided is unacceptable -issue school warning letter	Penalty Notice Warning to be considered.
Day 7	If no contact – home visit If contact but absence UA	No contact a) leave notes b) speak to neighbours c) checks with local authority. If continued UA refer to senior school staff– Pupil Attendance Service for Penalty Notice Fine
Day 10	Continuous absence – no reason provided	Notify Local Authority PAS and continue to implement procedures to address absence

Please note schools should have letters for:

- 3-day absence without good reason – parents asked to respond in writing or telephone call – warn that they can be issued with penalty notice if no response
- 5-day absence without good reason – parents asked to respond in writing and provide evidence of reason for absence. Penalty Notice Warning can be sent.

If the child is considered to be vulnerable then this process needs to be escalated – always make sure you have a list of vulnerable children and who on SLT is the

appropriate contact for example the SENDCO or the Designated Safeguarding Lead who may have other pertinent information that requires home visit or action on the first day of absence.

Absence escalation percentage table

Percentage	Responsibility	Action
94% - 96%	School Action: Attendance Lead / Attendance Officer	Review attendance – consider is absence authorised (is it one period of absence of several individual days - look for patterns) If authorised may decide to monitor. If unauthorised – write to parents advising them of attendance level and of concerns / expectations and possible next actions.
91% - 94%	School Action	Review attendance – consider if authorised – is evidence being provided If unauthorised has it reached the threshold for Penalty Notice Warning. Is a home visit / school attendance panel appropriate?
90% or below	School Action + PAS / other agencies where appropriate.	Review attendance – consider if absence is authorised – review reason and pattern. If child has a medical condition is a referral to Medical Needs Service appropriate. If they are subject to CP plan or other safeguarding concerns raised, then discuss with Designated Safeguarding Lead / allocated Social Worker. If low attendance is authorised due to exclusions have all inclusion options been considered (primary may seek advice from the re-integration service. Home visits should be made to ensure vital information is not missed. Consider absences using Emotional Based School Avoidance guidance.
		At less than 90% attendance a child is a Persistent Absentee and absence requires further investigation and possible statutory intervention depending on reason for absence. Long term illness should have been referred to Medical Needs Team; exclusions to School Inclusion Service.

Schools must notify the Local Authority of children who are absent for 10 consecutive days without authorisation. Email pas@camden.gov.uk