



The Lancaster School **Attendance Policy October 2018**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children, but have set an annual school target of 96.5%.

Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance -School Attendance (2014)

The DfE states that schools should:

promote good attendance and reduce absence,
including persistent absence ensure every child has access to full-time education
and act early to address patterns of absence

And that parents must:

perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school must attend regularly

And that pupils must:

be punctual to their lessons.

We believe good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying

Our schools believe sincerely that all pupils benefit from the education they provide and therefore from regular school attendance. To this end the schools will do as much as they can to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems affecting attendance will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

2. Expectations - Promoting good attendance

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- That they will attend school regularly
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will inform a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

We expect the following from parents:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing a good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us.
- Recognition and reward for good attendance
- A quality education.
- Encouraging attendance through good practice and rewards.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the school's attendance lead:

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and coordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed.

They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum.

A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of classroom staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance lead on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of pupils:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.

Responsibilities of parents/carers:

- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the Headteacher/Head of School any planned absences well in advance
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

4. Recording attendance:

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, and again at the start of the afternoon session.

Registers are taken at: 9am and 1pm

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

DfE guidance suggests all official registers should be closed a maximum of 30 minutes after the start of school.

All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in DfE guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M.

Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils.

Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined, and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10-week period, the school

will take steps to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with the Local Authorities ***Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools.***

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. If one is available, the school will place a child into the after-school club and provide the parent/carer with the bill.

5. School Organisation

For this policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance high priority and convey to the pupils the importance of the education being provided.

The headteacher/ Head of School will oversee the attendance policy and report to the Governors at least annually.

All staff will ensure that notification from parents concerning absences are recorded immediately.

Weekly Attendance Team meetings discuss the pattern of non-attendance of any pupils causing concern (below 90% attendance).

Appropriate actions are planned. This is shared with members of the Senior Leadership Team.

The Office Team will maintain a late book.

The Office Team will maintain a signed in/out book

The Office Team will ensure telephone messages are communicated to relevant staff and noted.

6. Reporting pupil absence

First day absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must:

Contact us by phone as early as possible on the first day of absence or call into school and report to reception.

7. How we respond to child absence:

When a pupil does not attend, the school will respond effectively to address the non-attendance. If a note or telephone call is not received from parents, then a text message or telephone call will be made. If there is no response then where possible, a message is left. If absence continues on the second day then a second attempt to call will be made. If absence continues for a third day, then the Attendance Team will make a home visit. If no contact is made then a letter will be left.

Where appropriate a request for a safe and well check conducted by Lincolnshire Police/PCSO will be made. If a Social Worker is involved with the family then they will be informed. If there are concerns relating to Safeguarding then a CSC referral will be made.

Attendance is monitored regularly by our Attendance Team. If attendance is raised as a concern, appropriate actions are taken which include letters (samples can be supplied on request), offered School Attendance Support meetings, home visits and Early Help Assessments (EHA's). If attendance does not improve, further actions

may include legal proceedings. In some cases, this will be referred to the Local Authority. **This could result in a fixed penalty of up to £120 per parent per child under section 444B of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure regular attendance at school.**

8. Children Missing in Education

A child missing education is defined as any child of compulsory school age (5-16), who is not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g at home, privately or in alternative provision) and who has been out of any education provision for a substantial of period of time.

If a child is deemed to be at risk of missing their education or cannot be contacted by the school, a referral will be sent to the Local Authority's Children Missing Education/Inclusion and Attendance team via LCC Data Exchange for further investigation.

If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after the first day we will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family, and visiting the family home to try to establish contact.

School will contact the CME team within 5 school days of a child missing education but will be responsible for trying to find the child until the 20th day missing from education. After the 20th day, if the child has not already been located, the school will again liaise with the CME coordinator and agree if the child should be taken off the school roll.

If your child is leaving our school parents are asked to:

Give the attendance officer comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known.

This should be submitted to our school in writing. If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education.

This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

10 days' absence:

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing.

9. Lateness

The schools actively discourage late arrival by challenging the parents of children who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation. The school doors open from 8.55am. Our school policy is that the register remains open until thirty minutes after registration.

10. Persistent Absence

We understand that some absence is unavoidable due to chronic illness for example. However, if your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the DfE.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school for a variety of reasons. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

The school monitors attendance weekly. If your child's attendance falls below 96%, we will send parents/carers a letter to notify them. If it continues to fall, we will invite parents in to meet with the school and we will open an 'Early Help Assessment'. If attendance falls below 90%, we will seek consent to consult with your GP and continue to support alongside the Early Help Assessment. If attendance continues below 90% we will issue a fixed penalty notice.

11. Request for leave of absence

If you need to take your child out of school, please write to the Executive Headteacher who will only be able to agree to a leave of absence under exceptional circumstances. This must be done at least two weeks prior to the intended leave.

12. Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices

Should parents not engage with the support offered, and attendance reaches levels significantly below Government guidelines, then a Fixed Penalty Warning will be issued. Should a child's attendance be significantly below Government guidelines after taking a Leave of Absence, then a Fixed Penalty Warning may be issued.

Should the need arise to issue a fixed penalty notice, then we will seek advice from the Local Authority with regard to proceeding. If the Local Authority feels this is justified then a member of the Attendance Team will complete the necessary paperwork for the Local Authority. The Local Authority issue the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). If the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) has not been paid then prosecution may follow. Schools can be asked if this cause of action is still deemed necessary.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

There are two main categories of absences:

Authorised absence:

is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.

Unauthorised absence:

is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

13. Dental and medical appointments

Whilst the school will grant requests for absence for dental and medical treatments, parent/carers are encouraged wherever possible to book medical and dental appointment outside of the school day. When appointments are unavoidable, the school office should be notified in advance of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected and/or returned to school.

14. Record Preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.